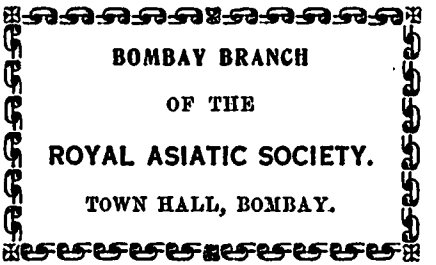
00085067



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 20 February, 2016

THE

EMPIRE OF THE CZAR;

OR,

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS STATE AND PROSPECTS OF RUSSIA,

MADE DURING A JOURNEY THROUGH THAT EMPIRE.

BY

85067 ae

THE MARQUIS DE CUSTINE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

"Respectez surtout les étrangers, de quelque qualité, de quelque rang qu'ils soient; et si vous n'êtes pas à même de les combler de présents, prodiguez-leur au moins des marques de bienveillance, puisque de la manière dont ils sont traités dans un pays dépend le bien et le mal qu'ils en disent en retournant dans le leur."

Extrait des Conseils de Vladimir Monomaque à ses Enfants en 1126
Histoire de l'Empire de Russie, par KARAMSIN, t. xi. p. 205.

X426

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1843.

914.7
Eire/D
85067

00085067

LONDON:
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE work recently published in Paris, of which these volumes are a translation, has appeared in the form of letters addressed to anonymous friends.

This form has not been preserved in the translation, which is divided into chapters; an arrangement better adapted to the taste of the English reader, and unobjectionable in other respects, as the division of the chapters still corresponds with that of the original epistles.

In making the alteration, a few very trivial modifications in the phraseology of the text were necessary.

The translator has likewise ventured on some occasions slightly to curtail the French paragraphs. It will, however, be sufficient to add, that no details have been abbreviated, nor one single observation omitted, that appeared likely to interest the general reader.

NOTICE

TO

BOOKSELLERS,

PROPRIETORS OF CIRCULATING LIBRARIES,

AND THE PUBLIC.

The Publishers of this work give notice that it is Copyright, and that in case of infringement they will avail themselves of the Protection now granted by Parliament to English Literature.

Any person having in his possession for sale or for hire a Foreign edition of an English Copyright is liable to a penalty, which the Publishers of this work intend to enforce.

It is necessary also to inform the Public generally, that single Copies of such works imported by travellers for their own reading are now prohibited, and the Custom-house officers in all our ports have strict orders to this effect.

The above regulations are equally in force in our Dependencies and Colonial Possessions.

London, July, 1843.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

A TASTE for travelling has never been with me a fashion; I brought it with me into the world, and I began to gratify it in early youth. We are all vaguely tormented with a desire to know a world which appears to us a dungeon because we have not ourselves chosen it for an abode. I should feel as if I could not depart in peace out of this narrow world if I had not endeavoured to explore my prison. The more I examine it, the more beautiful and extensive it becomes in my eyes. *To see in order to know:* such is the motto of the traveller; such is also mine: I have not adopted it; nature gave it to me.

To compare the different modes of existence in different nations, to study the manner of thinking and feeling peculiar to each, to perceive the relations which God has established between their history, their manners, and their physiognomy; in a word, to travel, is to procure for my curiosity an inexhaustible aliment, to supply my thoughts with an eternal impulse of activity: to prevent my surveying the world would be like robbing a literary man of the key of his library.

But if curiosity cause me to wander, an attachment which partakes of the nature of a domestic affection brings me back. I then take a review of my observations, and select from among the spoil, the ideas

which I imagine may be communicated with the greatest likelihood of being useful.

During my sojourn in Russia, as well as during all my other journeys, two thoughts, or rather sentiments, have never ceased to influence my heart, — a love of France, which renders me severe in my judgments upon foreigners, and upon the French themselves, for passionate affections are never indulgent; and a love of mankind. To find the balancing point between these two opposing objects of our affections here below, between the love of country and the love of fellow-men, is the vocation of every elevated mind. Religion alone can solve the problem: I do not flatter myself that I have attained it; but I can and ought to say that I have never ceased bending towards it all my efforts, without regard to the variations of fashion. With my religious ideas, I have passed through an unsympathising world; and now I see, not without a pleasurable surprise, these same ideas occupying the youthful minds of the new generation.

I am not one of those who view Christianity as a sacred veil that reason, in its illimitable progress, will one day tear away. Religion is veiled, but the veil is not religion: if Christianity mantles itself in symbols, it is not because its truth is obscure, but because it is too brightly dazzling, and because the eye is weak: as the vision becomes stronger, it will be able to pierce farther; and yet, nothing fundamental will be changed: the clouds are not spread over celestial objects, but over our earth.

Beyond the pale of Christianity, men remain in a state of isolation; or, if they unite, it is to form

political communities; in other words, to make war with fellow-men. Christianity alone has discovered the secret of free and pacific association, because it alone has shown to liberty in what it is that liberty consists. Christianity governs, and will yet more rigidly govern the earth, by the increasingly strict application of its divine morals to human transactions. Hitherto the Christian world has been more occupied with the mystic side of religion than with its political bearing. A new era commences for Christianity: perhaps our grandchildren will see the Gospel serving as the basis of public order.

But it would be impious to believe that this was the only end of the divine legislator; this is but his means.

Supernatural light cannot be acquired by the human race, except through the union of souls beyond and above the trammels of all temporal governments: a spiritual society, a society without limits: such is the hope — such the future prospect of the world.

I hear it said that this object will be henceforward attainable without the aid of our religion; that Christianity, built on the ruinous foundation of original sin, has had its day; and that to accomplish his true vocation, misunderstood until now, man needs only to obey the laws of nature.

Ambitious men of a superior order of talent, who revive these old doctrines by eloquence ever new, are obliged to add, in order to be consistent, that good and evil exist only in the human mind; and that the man who creates these phantoms may also destroy them.

The pretended new proofs which they give do not

satisfy me; but were they clear as the day, what change would they effect in me? Man, whether fallen by sin, or standing as nature placed him, is a soldier forcibly enlisted at his birth, and never discharged until death; and, even then, the believing Christian only changes his bonds. A prisoner of God, — labour and effort are the law of his life; cowardice appears to him like suicide, doubt is his torment, victory his hope, faith his repose, obedience his glory.

Such is man in all ages and in all countries; but such, above all, is man civilised by the religion of Jesus Christ. It may be said that good and evil are human inventions. But if the nature of man engender phantoms so obstinate, what is to save him from himself? and how is he to escape that malignant power of internal creation, of falsehood if you like, which exists and abides within him despite of himself and of you, and which has done so ever since the commencement of the world?

Unless you can substitute the peace of your conscience in place of the agitation of mine, you can do nothing for me..... Peace! No, however bold you may be, you would not dare to pretend to it! — and yet, peace is the right and the duty of the creature rationally endowed; for without peace he sinks below the brute: but,— O! mystery of mysteries! for you, for me, and for all — this object will never be attained by ourselves: for whatever may be said, the whole realm of nature does not contain that which can give peace to a single soul.

Thus, could you force me to assent to all your audacious assertions, you would only have furnished me with new proofs of the need of a physician of souls—

of a Redeemer, to cure the hallucinations of a creature so perverse, that it is incessantly and inevitably engendering within itself contest and contradiction, and which, by its very nature, flies from the repose it cannot dispense with, spreading around itself in the name of peace, war, with illusion, disorder and misfortune.

Now, the necessity of a Redeemer being once admitted, you must pardon me if I prefer addressing myself to Jesus Christ rather than to you!

Here we come to the root of the evil! Pride of intellect must be abased, and reason must own its insufficiency: As the source of reasoning dries up, that of feeling overflows: the soul becomes powerful so soon as she avows her want of strength; she no longer commands, she entreats; and man approaches near to his object when he falls upon his knees.

But when all shall be cast down, when all shall kiss the dust, who will remain erect upon earth? what power shall exist amid the ashes of the world? The power which shall remain is a pontiff in a church.

If that church — daughter of Christ, and mother of Christianity — has seen revolt issue from her bosom, the fault was in her priests, for her priests are men. But she will recover her unity, because these men, frail though they be, are not the less direct successors of the apostles, ordained from age to age by bishops who themselves received, bishop from bishop, under the imposition of hands traced backwards up to Saint Peter and to Jesus Christ, the infusion of the Holy Spirit, with the requisite authority to communicate that grace to the regenerated world.

Suppose — for is not every thing possible to God? — suppose that the human race shall wish to become sincerely Christian, will they in that case seek for Christianity in a book? No, they will apply to men who can explain that book. There must, then, always be an authority, even among the preachers of independence; and the authority which is chosen arbitrarily is not likely to equal that established for eighteen hundred centuries.

Will any believe that the Emperor of Russia is a better visible head of the church than the Bishop of Rome? The Russians have to believe so: but can they? Such is, however, the religious truth which they now preach to the Poles!

Would you, piquing yourself on consistency, obstinately reject all other authority but that of individual reason? This would be to perpetuate the war; because the government of reason nourishes pride, and pride engenders division. Alas! Christians little know the treasure they voluntarily deprived themselves of when they took it into their heads that people might have national churches! If all the churches in the world had become national, that is Protestant or schismatic, there would not now be any Christianity; there would be nothing but systems of theology subjected to human policy, which would modify them at its will, according to circumstances and localities.

To sum up: I am a Christian, because the destinies of man are not accomplished upon earth: I am a Catholic, because out of the Catholic church, Christianity becomes diluted and perishes.

After having surveyed the greater part of the

civilised world, after having applied myself with all my power during these different travels to discover some of the hidden springs on the action of which depends the life of empires, the following is, according to my attentive observations, the future that we may venture to predict.

In a human point of view — the universal division or dispersion of minds produced by the contempt felt for the only legitimate authority in matters of faith — in other words, the abolition of Christianity, not as a system of morals or philosophy, but as a religion; and this suffices for the strength of my argument. In a spiritual point of view — the triumph of Christianity, by the re-union of all the churches in the mother church,— in that shaken but indestructible church which is every age widening its gates for the return of those who went out from it. The universe must again become either pagan or catholic: pagan, in a manner more or less refined, with nature for its temple, sense for its worship, and reason for its idol; or catholic, with priests, of whom a certain number at least, sincerely put in practice before they preach, the precept of their master, "My kingdom is not of this world."

Such is the dilemma out of which the human mind will never be extricated. Beyond it, there is nothing on one side but imposture, on the other but illusion.

This prospective result has struck me ever since I thought at all: nevertheless, the ideas of the age were so different from mine, that I wanted — not faith, but boldness: I felt all the weakness of isolation; still I did not cease to protest with all my power in favour of

my creed. But now that it has become popular in a part of Christendom, now that the great interests which agitate the world are those which have always caused my heart to beat, now that the approaching future is big with the problem for the solution of which I have never ceased to search in my obscurity, I discover that I have a place in the world, I feel supported; if not in my own country (still a prey to that destructive, narrow, exhausted philosophy which continues to retain a large portion of France out of the debate upon the great interests of the world), yet at least in christian Europe. It is this support which has emboldened me more clearly to explain my views in various parts of the present work, and to draw from them their ultimate consequences.

Wherever I have set foot on earth, from Morocco to the frontiers of Siberia, I have seen smouldering the fires of religious war; not any longer, let us hope, to be the war of the armed hand, the least decisive of any, but the war of ideas. God alone knows the secret of events; but every man who observes and reflects can foresee some of the questions that will be resolved by the future: those questions are all religious. Upon the attitude which France may take in the world as a Catholic power, will depend her political influence. In the proportion that revolutionary spirits leave her, catholic hearts will draw around her. In this respect, the force of things so governs men, that a king supremely tolerant, and a minister who is a Protestant, have become throughout the world the most zealous defenders of Catholicism, simply because they are Frenchmen.

Such were the constant subjects of my meditation

and my solicitude during the long pilgrimage, the account of which here follows; an account varied as the varying and errant life of the traveller, but in which a love of country, combined with more general views, will be always seen.

Nevertheless, with what a mass of controversy are not these ideas connected which now agitate the world, long absorbed in a civilisation altogether material?

To acknowledge the divinity of Jesus Christ is undoubtedly to do much, it is more than is done by the greater number of Protestants; still this is only the commencement of Christianity. Even the pagans were willing to raise temples to Him who came to demolish all the temples of their religion. Were they Christians because they proposed to the apostles to place Christ among the number of their gods? A Christian is a member of the church of Christ. Now this exclusive church is one; it has its visible head; and it inquires about the faith of each man quite as much as about his acts, because it governs by the mind.

This church deplores the strange abuse that has been made in our days of the word Christian toleration, to the promotion of philosophical indifference. To make a dogma of toleration, and to substitute that human dogma for all those which are divine, is to destroy religion under the pretext of rendering it amiable. In the eyes of the Catholic church, to practise the virtue of toleration is not to enter into any covenant or to make any compromise respecting principles, but to protest against violence, and to employ prayer, patience, gentleness and persuasion in the

service of eternal truth: such is not modern toleration. That creed of indifference which became, more than a century ago, the basis of the new theology, loses its hold upon the esteem of Christians in the proportion that it robs faith of its power: true toleration — toleration confined within the limits of piety — is not the normal state of the soul, it is the remedy which a charitable religion and a wise policy oppose to diseases of the mind.

What is meant by that lately invented appellation, *Neo-catholicism?* Catholicism cannot become new without ceasing to exist. New converts, tired of being pushed about by every wind of doctrine, and seeking in the sanctuary a shelter from the torment of the ideas of the age, may be called Neo-catholics, but Neo-catholicism cannot be spoken of except through a misconception of the essence of religion, for the word implies contradiction.

Nothing is less ambiguous than our faith; it is no system of philosophy, of which each one may take or reject what he pleases: an individual is altogether a Catholic or he is no Catholic at all; there can be no almost, nor yet any new manner in Catholicism. Neo-catholicism is a disguised sect which must soon abjure error to return into the bosom of the church, under penalty of being otherwise condemned by a church justly impressed with the necessity of preserving the purity of faith, much more than with the ambition of increasing the number of her doubtful and equivocal children. When the world shall adopt Christianity with sincerity, it will take it as it is. The essential point is that the sacred trust remain pure from alloy.

Nevertheless the Catholic church may reform it-

self as regards customs, the discipline of the clergy, and even as regards doctrine upon points which do not affect the fundamentals of faith; what indeed is its history, its life, but one perpetual reform? this legitimate and uninterrupted reform can however be only carried on under the direction of ecclesiastical authority and according to canonical law.

The more I see of the world, its different states and tribes, the more am I convinced that truth is immutable: it was defended with barbarity by barbarous men in barbarous ages; it will in future be defended with humanity: but its purity cannot be affected either by the prism of error with which its adversaries are dazzled, or by the crimes of its own champions.

I should like to send into Russia all Christians who are not Catholic, to show them what our religion may be brought to when taught in a *national* church, when practised under the direction of a *national* clergy.

The spectacle of abject servility into which the sacerdotal power can fall in a land where the church is only held of the state, would make every consistent Protestant recoil. A national church or a national clergy are words which ought never to have been joined; the church is, by its very essence, superior to all national distinctions, all human associations; to abandon the church universal in order to enter into any political church, is to do worse than err in faith, —it is to abjure the faith, it is to fall back again from heaven to earth.

And yet how many sincere, how many excellent men believed, at the birth of Protestantism, that

they should be purifying their creed by adopting the new doctrines which have only served to narrow their minds! Since then, indifference, masked and extolled under the attractive name of toleration, has perpetuated error.

The circumstance which renders Russia the most singular State now to be seen in the world is that extreme barbarism, favoured by the enslavement of the church, and extreme civilisation, imported by an eclectic government from foreign lands, are there to be seen united. To understand how tranquillity, or at least immobility, can spring from the shock of elements so opposed, it will be necessary to follow the traveller into the heart of this singular country.

The mode which I employ of describing places and defining characters, appears to me, if not the most favourable to the author, at least the most likely to inspire confidence in the reader, whom I oblige to follow me, and whom I render the judge himself of the development of those ideas that may be suggested to me.

I arrived in a new country without any other prejudices, than those which no man can guard against; those which a conscientious study of its history impart. I examined objects, I observed facts and individuals, while candidly permitting daily experience to modify my opinions. Very few exclusive political notions incommoded me in this spontaneous labour, in which religion alone was my unchanging rule; and even that rule may be rejected by the reader without the recital of facts and the moral consequences that flow from them being discarded, or confounded with the reprobation that I shall meet with from those whose creeds do not agree with mine.

I may be accused of having prejudices, but I shall never be reproached with intentionally disguising the truth.

The descriptions of what I saw were made upon the spot, the recitals of what I heard each day were committed to paper on the same evening. Thus, my conversations with the Emperor, given word for word in the ensuing chapters, cannot fail to possess a species of interest: that of exactitude. They will also serve, I hope, to render this prince, so differently viewed among us and throughout Europe, better known.

The chapters that follow were not all destined for the public. Several of the early ones were written as purely confidential letters. Fatigued with writing, but not with travelling, I resolved, this time, to observe without any methodical plan, and to keep my descriptions for my friends. The reasons that decided me to publish the whole will be seen in the course of the work.

The principal one was the feeling that my views were daily modified by the examination to which I subjected a state of society absolutely new to me. It struck me that in speaking the truth of Russia, I should be doing something bold and novel: hitherto, fear and interest have dictated exaggerated eulogies; hatred has also published calumnies: I am not afraid of making wreck either on the one rock or the other.

I went to Russia to seek for arguments against representative government, I return a partisan of constitutions. A mixed government is not the most favourable to action; but in their old age, nations have less need of acting: this government is the one

which most aids production, and which procures to man the greatest amount of prosperity; it is, above all, the one which imparts the highest activity to mind within the sphere of practical ideas: in short, it renders the citizen independent, not by the elevation of sentiments, but by the operation of laws; assuredly these are great compensations for great disadvantages.

As I gradually became acquainted with the tremendous and singular government, regulated, or I might say founded, by Peter I., I became aware of the importance of the mission which chance had entrusted to me.

The extreme curiosity with which my work inspired the Russians, who were evidently rendered unquiet by the reserve of my language, first led me to think, that I had more power than I previously attributed to myself; I therefore became attentive and prudent, for I was not long in discovering the danger to which my sincerity might expose me. Not daring to send my letters by post, I preserved them all, and kept them concealed with extreme care; so that on my return to France, my journey was written, and in my own hands. Nevertheless, I have hesitated to publish it for three years: this is the time which I have needed to reconcile, in the secret of my conscience, what I believed to be the conflicting claims of gratitude and of truth! The latter at last prevails, because it appears to me to be truth of a nature that will interest my country. I cannot forget that, above all else, I write for France, and I hold it my duty to reveal to her useful and important facts.

I consider myself competent and authorised to

judge, even severely if my conscience urges me, a country where I have friends, to analyse, without descending into offensive personalities, the character of public men, to quote the words of political persons, to commence with those of the highest personage in the state, to recount their actions, and to carry out to the last stage of inquiry the reflections which these examinations may suggest; provided, however, that in capriciously pursuing the course of my ideas, I do not give them to others except for just the worth that they have in my own eyes: this, it appears to me, is all that constitutes the probity of an author.

But in thus yielding to duty, I have respected, at least I hope so, all the rules of social propriety; for I maintain that there is a proper manner of expressing severe truths: this manner consists in speaking only upon conviction, whilst repelling the suggestions of vanity.

Besides, having seen much to admire in Russia, I have been able to mingle many praises in my descriptions.

The Russians will not be satisfied; when was self-love ever known to be? And yet no one has ever been struck more than I, by the greatness and political importance of their nation. The high destinies of these people, these last comers upon the old theatre of the world, engaged my mind during the whole time of my stay among them. The Russians, viewed as a body, appeared to me as being great, even in their most shocking vices; viewed as individuals, I considered them amiable. In the character of the common people I found much to interest: these

flattering truths ought, I think, to compensate for others less agreeable. But, hitherto, the Russians have been treated as spoiled children by the greater number of travellers.

If the discordances that one cannot help remarking in their social state, if the spirit of their government, essentially opposed to my ideas and habits, have drawn from me reproaches, and even cries of indignation, my praises, equally voluntary, must have the greater weight.

But these Orientals, habituated as they are to breathe and dispense the most direct incense of flattery, will be sensible to nothing but blame. All disapprobation appears to them as treachery; they call every severe truth a falsehood; they will not perceive the delicate admiration that may sometimes lurk under my apparent criticisms — the regret and, on some occasions, the sympathy that accompany my most severe remarks.

If they have not converted me to their religions (they have several, and among these, political religion is not the least intolerant), if, on the contrary, they have modified my monarchical ideas in a way that is opposed to despotism and favourable to representative government, they will be offended simply because I am not of their opinion. I regret that such is the case, but I prefer regret to remorse.

If I were not resigned to their injustice, I should not print these chapters. Besides, though they may complain of me in words, they will absolve me in their consciences: this testimony will be sufficient for me. Every honest Russian will admit that if I have committed errors of detail for want of time to

rectify my impressions, I have described Russia in general, as it really is. They will make allowance for the difficulties which I have had to conquer, and will give me credit for the quickness with which I have discerned the advantageous traits of their primitive character under the political mask that has disfigured it for so many ages.

The facts of which I have been witness are recorded precisely as they passed before my eyes; those which were related to me, are given as I received them; I have not endeavoured to deceive the reader by substituting myself for the persons whom I consulted. If I have abstained from naming, or in any way indicating these persons, my discretion will undoubtedly be appreciated; it is one proof more of the degree of confidence which the enlightened individuals deserve to whom I thus ventured to address myself for information respecting certain facts that it was impossible for me to observe personally. It is superfluous to add that I have only cited those to which the character and position of the men from whom I had them, gave, in my eyes, an unquestionable stamp of authority.

Aided by my scrupulous exactitude, the reader may judge for himself of the degree of authority that should be ascribed to these secondary facts, which, it may be further observed, occupy but a very small place in my narrations.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

Arrival of the Hereditary Grand Duke of Russia at Ems. — Character of Russian Courtiers. — The Person of the Grand Duke. — His Father and Uncle at the same Age. — His Equipages and Suite. — Superiority of the English in all external Appurtenances. — The Rhine. — The River more beautiful than its Banks. — Fire-Flies on the Rhine, Page 1

CHAPTER II.

Character and Progress of German Civilisation. — Prussian Protestantism. — Music a means of Education. — Prussia the Auxiliary of Russia. — Luther the Personification of German Character. — French Minister at Berlin. — Anecdote of the Empress Catherine. — Anecdote of the Convention of Pilnitz. Family Memoirs. — Souvenirs of the Revolution. — General Custine. — Heroism of his Daughter-in-Law. — His Son. — Tragic Prison Scene. — Early Impressions of Infancy. 7

CHAPTER III.

Continuation of the Life of Madame de Custine. — Her Arrest. — Providential Concealment of her Papers. — Devotion of Nanette. — Scene at the tomb of Marat. — Madame de Beauharnais in Prison. — Anecdotes of Prison Life. — Interrogation of Madame de Custine. — Inspires one of her Judges

with the Desire of saving her. — The means which he uses during Six Months to retard her Execution. — End of the Reign of Terror. — Character of Robespierre. — The Prisons after his Fall. — Petition of Nanette. — Extraordinary Deliverance of Madame de Custine. — Returns to her House. — Sickness and Poverty. — Noble Conduct of Jerome. — His after History. — Journey of Madame de Custine to Switzerland.—Ballad of Le Rosier.—Lavater.—Madame de Custine under the Empire. — Her Friends. — Death in 1826. Page 25

CHAPTER IV.

Conversation at Lubeck on Peculiarities in the Russian Character.—Journey from Berlin to Lubeck. — Imaginary Evils. — Travemunde. — Character of Northern Landscapes. — Holstein Fishermen. — Sublimity of Flat Scenery. — Nights of the North. — It is Civilisation which heightens Admiration of the Scenes of Nature. — The Steppes of Russia. — Burning of the Steamer Nicholas I. — Road from Schwerin to Lubeck. — A German Statesman. — The Fair Bath-Woman of Travemunde. — Reflections. - - - - 49

CHAPTER V.

Polar Nights. — Montesquieu and his System. — Scenery of the North. — Flatness of the Earth's Surface near the Pole. — Shores of Finland. — Melancholy of Northern People. — Prince K——. — Definitions of Nobility. — The English Nobility. — Freedom of Speech. — Canning. — Napoleon. — Confidential Conversation. — Glance at Russian History. — Institutions and Spirit of Chivalry unknown in Russia. — The Nature of an Autocracy. — Politics and Religion are identical in Russia. — Future Influence of Russia. — Fate of Paris. — Prince and Princess D——. — The Cold-Water Cure. — Good Manners of the Higher Orders in Russia. — Society in France before the Revolution. — A Modern Frenchman of the Middle Classes. — His mauvais Ton. — Agreeable Society on the Steam-Boat. — Russian National Dances. — Two Americans. — Steam-Boat Accident. — Isle of Dago. - - - - - - - - - 61

CHAPTER VI.

Tragedy of Baron de Sternberg. — Type of Lord Byron's Heroes. — Parallel between Sir W. Scott and Byron. — Historical Romance. — Marriage of Peter the Great. — Romodanowski. — Influence of the Greek Church in Russia. — Tyranny supported by Falsehood. — Corpse in the Church of Revel. — The Emperor Alexander deceived. — Russian Sensitiveness as to the Opinions of Foreigners. — A Spy . Page 97

CHAPTER VII.

The Russian Marine. — Remark of Lord Durham's. — Great Efforts for small Results. — The Amusements of Despotism. — Kronstadt. — Russian Custom-House. — Gloomy Aspect of Nature. — Recollections of Rome. — English Poetical Name for Ships of War. — Object of Peter the Great. — The Finns. — Batteries of Kronstadt. — Abject Character of the Lower Classes of Russian Employés. — Inquisitions of the Police, and the Custom-House. — Sudden Change in the Manners of Fellow-Travellers. — Fickleness of Northern People. - - - - - - - - 113

CHAPTER VIII.

Approach to Petersburg by the Neva. — Incongruity between the Climate and Aspect of the Country and the Style of Architecture. — Absurd Imitation of the Monuments of Greece. — The Custom-House and Police. — Inquisitorial Examination. — Difficulties of Landing. — Appearance of the Streets. — Statue of Peter the Great. — The Winter Palace. — Rebuilt in one Year. — The Means employed. — Russian Despotism. — Citation from Herberstein. — Karamsin. — The Character of the People accords with that of the Government. - - - - - - - 128

CHAPTER IX.

The Drowska. — Costume of the Lower Orders. — Wooden Pavements. — Petersburg in the Morning. — Resemblance of the City to a Barrack. — Contrast between Russia and Spain.

—Difference between Tyranny and Despotism.—The Tchinn. —Peculiar Character of the Russian Government. — The Arts in Russia. — A Russian Hotel. — The Evils to be encountered there. — The Michael Palaces. — Death of Paul I. — The Spy baffled. — The Neva, its Quays and Bridges. — Cabin of Peter I. — The Citadel, its Tombs and Dungeons. — Church of St. Alexander Newski. — Russian Veterans. — Austerity of the Czar. — Russian Faith in the Future, and its Realisation. — Munich and Petersburg compared. — Interior of the Fortress. — The Imperial Tombs. — Subterranean Prison. — Russian Prisoners. — Moral Degradation of the Higher Classes. — Catholic Church. — Precarious Toleration. —Tomb of the last King of Poland, and of Moreau. Page 142

CHAPTER X.

Visit to the Islands. — Character of the Scenery. — Artificial Beauties. — Comparison between Russian and English Taste. — Aim and Characteristics of Russian Civilisation. — Happiness impossible in Russia. — Fashionable Life in St. Petersburg. — Equality under Despotism. — Characteristic Traits of Russian Society. — Absolute Power. — Pavilion of the Empress. —Vermin in the Houses and Palaces of St. Petersburg. — Costume of the Lower Orders. — Beauty of the Men when of pure Slavonian Race. — The Women. — Condition of the Russian Peasantry. — The Sale of Serfs. — Commerce can alone alter the present State of Things. — Care taken to conceal the Truth from Foreigners. — Religious Usurpation of Peter the Great. — His Character and Monstrous Cruelties. — Culpability of the Aristocracy. — The Author suspected. — State of Medical Art in Russia. — Universal Mystery. — Permission to be present at the Marriage of the Grand Duchess. - - - - - - - - 163

CHAPTER XI.

Coincidence of Dates. — Marriage of the Grandson of M. de Beauharnais. — Chapel of the Court. — The Emperor Nicholas. — His Person. — The Empress. — Consequences of Despotism. — The Author's Début at Court. — An Accident. — Magnificent Decorations and Costume. — Entrée of the

Imperial Family. — The Emperor Master of the Ceremonies. — Forms of the Greek Church. — M. de Pahlen. — Emotion of the Empress. — Description of the Duke of Leuchtenberg. — His Impatience. — Prudery in Modern Conversation. — Its Cause. — Music of the Imperial Chapel. — The Archbishop. — The Emperor kisses his Hand. — Talisman of M. de Beauharnais. — No Crowd in Russia. — Immensity of the Public Squares. — The Column of Alexander. — False Taste of the Russians in the Arts. — Triumphal Arch. — Storm at the Moment of the Marriage. — The Emperor to be pitied. — The Empress a Victim. — The Author's Presentation. — The Emperor's Voice. — The Affability of the Empress. — A Fête at the Palace. — Courtiers. — Court Dances. — The Polonaise. — The Grand Gallery. — Political Reflections. — French Politics. — The Supper. — Khan of The Kirguises. — The Queen of Georgia. — Russian Court Dress. — A Genevese at the Emperor's Table. — Politeness of the Monarch. — A Night Scene in the North. — An unexpected Interview with the Empress. — Philosophy of Despotism. - - - - - - - Page 190

CHAPTER XII.

Note. — Excitement of a Petersburg Life. — The Emperor truly a Russian. — Affability of the Empress. — Comparison between Paris and Petersburg. — Definition of Politeness. — Fête at the Michael Palace. — Conversation with the Grand Duchess Helena. — Beautiful Illumination. — A Grove in a Ball-Room. — Jet d'Eau. — Future Prospects of Democracy. — Interesting Conversation with the Emperor. — Russia explained. — Improvements in the Kremlin. — An English Nobleman and his Family. — English Politeness. — Anecdote in Note. — The French Ambassador. — The Grand Chamberlain. — Severe Reprimand of the Emperor's. - 244

CHAPTER XIII.

The Ladies of the Court. — The Finns. — The Opera. — The Emperor there. — Imposing Person of this Prince. — His Accession to the Throne. — Courage of the Empress. — The Emperor's Recital of this Scene to the Author. — Another

Description of the Emperor. — Continuation of his Conversation. — His Political Opinions. — Sincerity of his Language. — Fête at the Duchess of Oldenburg's. — Bal Champêtre. — Flowers in Russia. — The Friend of the Empress. — Several Conversations with the Emperor. — His noble Sentiments. — Confidence with which he inspires those who approach him. — Aristocracy the only Bulwark of Liberty. — Parallel between Autocracies and Democracies. — The Arts in Petersburg. — All true Talent is national. - - - Page 262

CHAPTER XIV.

The Population of Petersburg. — Solitude of the Streets. — The Architecture. — Place du Carrousel in Paris. — Square of the Grand Duke at Florence. — The Perspective Newski. — Pavements. — Effects of the Thaw. — Interior of the Houses. — The Beds. — Visit to Prince ——. — Bowers in the Drawing-Rooms. — Beauty of the Slavonian Men. — Russian Coachmen and Postilions. — The Feldjäger. — — The Poetical Aspect of the Land. — Contrast between Men and Things. — Architecture of the Churches. — A General View of Petersburg. — Picturesque and beautiful notwithstanding its Architecture. — Nature beautiful even near the Pole. — Antipathy between the Teutonic and Russian Races. — Its Effects in Poland. — Resemblance between the Russians and Spaniards. — Heat of the Summer. — Fuel in Petersburg. — Address of the Russian People. — The Designs of Providence. — Future Scarcity of Fuel in Russia. — Want of Inventive Mechanical Genius among the People. — The Romans of the North. — Relation between People and their Governments. — The Plasterers. — Ugliness and Dirtiness of the Women of the Lower Classes. — Their Disproportion in point of Number, and its Result. — Asiatic Manners. — Russian Politeness. - - - - 288

THE

EMPIRE OF THE CZAR.

CHAPTER I.

ARRIVAL OF THE HEREDITARY GRAND DUKE OF RUSSIA AT EMS. — CHARACTER OF RUSSIAN COURTIERS. — THE PERSON OF THE GRAND DUKE. — HIS FATHER AND UNCLE AT THE SAME AGE. — HIS EQUIPAGES AND SUITE. — SUPERIORITY OF THE ENGLISH IN ALL EXTERNAL APPURTENANCES. — THE RHINE. — THE RIVER MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN ITS BANKS. — FIRE-FLIES ON THE RHINE.

I DATE from yesterday the commencement of my Russian Travels.* The Hereditary Grand Duke has arrived at Ems, preceded by ten or twelve carriages, and attended by a numerous court.

What has chiefly struck me in my first view of Russian courtiers is the extraordinary submissiveness with which, as grandees, they perform their *devoirs*. They seem, in fact, to be only a higher order of slaves; but the moment the Prince has retired, a free, unrestrained, and decided manner is reassumed, which contrasts unpleasantly with that complete abnegation of self, affected only the moment before. In a word, there appears to reign throughout the suite

* 5th June, 1839.

of the heir of the imperial throne, a habit of servile docility from which the nobles are not more exempt than the valets. It is not merely the etiquette that regulates other courts, where official respect, the importance of the office rather than that of the person, the compulsory part, in short, that has to be played, produces ennui, and sometimes ridicule: it is something more; it is a spontaneous and involuntary humility, which yet does not altogether exclude arrogance: it seems to me as though I could hear them say, "since it cannot be otherwise, we are glad to have it so." This mixture of pride and humiliation displeases me, and by no means prepossesses me in favour of the country I am about to survey.

I found myself amid the crowd of curious spectators close to the Grand Duke, just as he descended from his carriage; and as he stood for some time before entering the gate of the *maison des bains*, talking with a Russian lady, the Countess ——, I was able to observe him at my leisure. His age, as his appearance indicates, is twenty: his height is commanding, but he appears to me, for so young a man, rather fat. His features would be handsome were it not that their fulness destroys their expression. His round face rather resembles that of a German than a Russ; it suggests an idea of what the Emperor Alexander's must have been at the same age, without however recalling, in any degree, the physiognomy of the Calmuc. A face of this cast will pass through many changes before assuming its definitive character. The habitual humour which it, at present, denotes, is gentleness and benevolence; but between the youthful smile of the eyes, and the constant contraction of the

mouth, there is, nevertheless, a discordance which does not bespeak frankness, and which, perhaps, indicates some inward suffering. The sorrows of youth —of that age in which happiness is, as it were, the right of man—are secrets the better guarded, because they are mysteries inexplicable even to those who experience them. The expression of this young prince is amiable; his carriage is graceful, imposing, and altogether princely; and his manner modest, without being timid, which must alone gain him much good will. The embarrassment of great people is so embarrassing to others, that their ease always wears the character of affability, to which in fact it amounts. When they believe themselves to be something more than common mortals, they become constrained, both by the direct influence of such an opinion, and by the hopeless effort of inducing others to share it. This absurd inquietude does not disturb the Grand Duke. His presence conveys the idea of a perfectly well-bred man, and if he ever reign, it will be by the charm inherent in graceful manners that he will cause himself to be obeyed: it will not be by terror, unless, at least, the *necessities* attached to the office of a Russian Emperor should, in changing his position, change his disposition also.

Since writing the above, I have again seen the Hereditary Grand Duke, and have examined him more nearly and leisurely. He had cast off his uniform, which appeared to fit him too closely, and gave to his person a bloated appearance. In my opinion he looks best in undress. His general bearing is certainly pleasing; his carriage is lofty, yet without military stiffness. The kind of grace by which he

is distinguished, reminds one of that peculiar charm of manner which seems to belong to the Slavonic race. It is not the expression of the quick passions of southern climes, neither is it the imperturbable coolness of the people of the north: it is a combination of simplicity, of southern mobility, and of Scandinavian melancholy. The Slavonians are fair-complexioned Arabs*; the Grand Duke is more than half German, but in Mecklenburg and Holstein, as in some parts of Russia, there are Germans of Slavonian extraction.

The countenance of this prince, notwithstanding his youth, presents fewer attractions than his figure. His complexion has already lost its freshness†; one can observe that he is under the influence of some cause of grief; his eye-lids are cast down with a sadness that betrays the cares of a riper age. His well-formed mouth is not without an expression of sweetness; his Grecian profile reminds me of antique medals, or of the portraits of the Empress Catherine; but notwithstanding his expression of amiableness (an expression which almost always imparts that also of beauty), his youth, and, yet more, his German blood, it is impossible to avoid observing in the lines of his face a power of dissimulation which one trembles to see in so young a man. This trait is doubtless the impress of destiny. It convinces me that this prince will be called to the throne. The tones of his voice are sweet, which is not commonly

* "Des Arabes blonds."

† The Grand Duke had been ill some time before his arrival at Ems.

the case in his family; they say it is a gift which he has inherited from his mother.

He shines among the young people of his suite without our discovering what it is that preserves the distance which may be easily observed to exist between them, unless it be the perfect gracefulness of his person. Gracefulness always indicates an amiable mental endowment; it depicts mind upon the features, embodies it in the carriage and the attitudes, and pleases at the very time that it commands. Russian travellers had spoken to me of the beauty of the prince as quite a phenomenon. Without this exaggeration I should have been more struck with it; besides, I could not but recollect the romantic mien, the archangelic form, of his father and his uncle, the Grand Duke Michael, who, when, in 1815, they visited Paris, were called "*the northern lights*," and I felt inclined to be severe, because I had been deceived: yet, notwithstanding this, the Grand Duke of Russia appears to me as one of the finest models of a prince that I have ever met with.

With the inelegance of his equipages, the disorder of the baggage, and the carelessness of the servants, I have been much struck. In contrasting this imperial *cortège* with the magnificent simplicity of English equipages, and the careful superintendence that English servants bestow upon every thing, one is reminded that to have one's carriages and harness made in London would not be all that is requisite towards attaining that perfection in material, or external arrangements, the possession of which constitutes the superiority of the English in so matter-of-fact an age as our own.

Yesterday I went to see the sun setting on the

Rhine. It was a magnificent spectacle. It is not, however, the banks of the river, with their monotonous ruins and parched vineyards, which occupy too much of the landscape to be agreeable to the eye, that I chiefly admire in this beautiful yet overlauded country. I have seen elsewhere banks more commanding, more varied, more lovely; finer forests, a more luxuriant vegetation, and more picturesque and striking points of view: it is the river itself, especially as viewed from the shore, that appears to me the most wonderful object in the scene. This immense body of water, gliding with an ever equal motion through the country which it beautifies and enlivens, reveals to me a power in creation that overwhelms my senses. In watching its movements I liken myself to a physician examining the pulse of a man in order to ascertain his strength. Rivers are the arterics of our globe, and before their manifestation of universal life I stand fixed in awe and admiration; I feel myself to be in the presence of my sovereign; I see eternity, I believe, and I almost grasp the infinite. There is in this a sublime mystery; in nature what I cannot comprehend I admire, and my ignorance takes refuge in adoration. Thus it is, that science to me is less necessary than to discontented minds.

We shall literally die of heat. It is many years since the air of the valley of Ems, always oppressive, has risen to the present temperature. Last night, in returning from the banks of the Rhine, I saw in the woods a swarm of fire-flies — my beloved Italian *luccioli.* I had never before observed them, except in hot climates.

I set out in two days for Berlin and St. Petersburg.

CHAP. II.*

CHARACTER AND PROGRESS OF GERMAN CIVILISATION. — PRUSSIAN PROTESTANTISM. — MUSIC A MEANS OF EDUCATION. — PRUSSIA THE AUXILIARY OF RUSSIA. — LUTHER THE PERSONIFICATION OF GERMAN CHARACTER. — FRENCH MINISTER AT BERLIN. — ANECDOTE OF THE EMPRESS CATHERINE. — ANECDOTE OF THE CONVENTION OF PILNITZ. — FAMILY MEMOIRS. — SOUVENIRS OF THE REVOLUTION. — GENERAL CUSTINE. — HEROISM OF HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW. — HIS SON. — TRAGIC PRISON SCENE. — EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF INFANCY.

It must be owned, though to the disgrace of human kind, that there exists for the multitude, a happiness which is altogether material. This is a happiness which Germany, and more especially Prussia, is now enjoying. By means of its admirable roads, its custom-house system, and its excellent political administration, this latter country, the cradle of Protestantism, has, in the present day, taken the lead of us in the road of physical civilisation: which is a species of religion of the senses, that has made human nature its god. It is only too true that modern governments favour this refined materialism — ultimate result of the religious reform of the sixteenth century. Limiting their efforts to the development of temporal good, it would appear as though their sole object was to prove to the world, that the idea

* Written at Berlin.

of Divinity is not necessary to the wellbeing of a nation.*

Nevertheless, the wisdom and economy which direct the administration of affairs in this country, are, to the Prussians, just subjects of pride. Their rural schools are conscientiously conducted, and rigidly inspected. In every village, music is employed as a means of amusing, and, at the same time, of civilising the people. There is no church without an organ, and in every parish, the school-master possesses a knowledge of music. On Sundays he instructs the peasants in singing, accompanying them upon the organ: They are thus, in the smallest villages, able to perform the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the old Italian and German school of religious music. Pieces of this ancient and severe school are not written for more than four voices. Where is there the country school-master who cannot find among those around him a bass, a tenor, and two children, first and second *soprano*, to sing these pieces? Every school-master in Prussia is a village Hullah.† These rural concerts preserve a taste for music, form a counter-attraction to that of the tavern, and prepare the minds of the people for religious instruction.‡ This latter has degenerated among the Protestants into a course of practical morals; but the time is not far distant when religion will resume her rights: the being endowed with im-

* The flight of three years, and a new reign, have already deprived this remark of a great part of its point.

† In the original, a "Wilhem Champêtre."—*Trans.*

‡ Could there not be found in France men who would devote themselves to establishing among us a system so excellent, and which has so long existed in Prussia?

mortality will not always rest content with a terrestrial empire, and the people the most ready to appreciate the pleasures of art, will also be the first to comprehend the new evidences of the Divine revelation.* It is, then, only just to admit that the Prussian government is worthily preparing its people to perform a part in that renovation of religion, whose approach is already announced to the world by signs that cannot be mistaken.

Prussia will soon discover that her philosophy is insufficient to impart mental satisfaction. Though this glorious future may be expected, the city of Berlin belongs at present to the least philosophical country in the world — to Russia; and, notwithstanding this, the German people, seduced by the display of a skilful administration, turn their thoughts towards Prussia. They fancy that it is from this quarter they will obtain those liberal institutions which many yet confound with the conquests of industry, as though luxury and liberty, opulence and independence, were synonymous.

The grand fault of the German people, whose character was personified in Luther, is an inclination to animal enjoyments. In our times nothing opposes this inclination; every thing contributes to foster it. Thus, sacrificing their liberty and independence to the barren hope of a prosperity altogether material, the Germans, enchained by a political system that addresses the senses, and by a religion of intellect, fail in their duty towards themselves and towards the world. Nations, like individuals, have their vocation.

* "Les nouvelles preuves des révélations du ciel."

If Germany forgets hers, the fault is mainly owing to Prussia, the ancient focus of that inconsistent philosophy, by courtesy denominated a religion.*

France is now represented in Prussia by a minister who unites all the requisites of an enlightened modern diplomatist. No mysterious airs, no affected reserve, no unnecessary concealment, betray the opinion that he might entertain of his own importance. One scarcely recollects the post he occupies, until reminded of it by the ability with which its duties are fulfilled. Appreciating with the happiest tact the wants and the tendencies of modern society, he tranquilly proceeds in advance of the future, without, however, disdaining the lessons of the past; in a word, he is one of the small remaining number of those men of former times who are now become so necessary to the present.

Originally from the same province as myself, he has related to me details connected with the history of my family, with which I was unacquainted, and from which I derived much gratification. This I admit without hesitation, for that pious admiration with which we contemplate the heroism of our fathers ought not to be identified with pride.

I knew that there existed in the archives of the French legation at Berlin, letters and diplomatic notes possessing a high interest for the world in general, and for myself in particular: they are my father's.

* These remarks on protestantism may be less offensive to the English reader, when he recollects that it is *German* protestantism by which they are more immediately suggested. — *Trans.*

In 1792, when but twenty-two years old, he was selected by the ministers of Louis XVI., who had then been constitutional king for about a year, to manage a delicate and important mission to the Duke of Brunswick. The object was to induce the Duke to decide in refusing the command of the army allied against France. It was hoped, and with reason, that the crisis of our revolution would prove less dangerous to the country and the king, if foreigners did not attempt violently to interfere with its progress.

My father arrived at Brunswick too late. The Duke had given his word. The confidence which the character and ability of young Custine inspired in France, was, however, such, that, instead of being recalled to Paris, he was sent to the Prussian court, to make new efforts to detach King William II. from that same coalition whose armies the Duke of Brunswick had promised to command.

Shortly before the arrival of my father at Berlin, M. de Ségur, the French ambassador in Prussia, had failed in this difficult negotiation. My father was sent to replace him.

King William had not treated M. de Ségur well. On one occasion, the latter returned home so exasperated, and under such an impression that his reputation as a skilful diplomatist was for ever compromised, that he attempted self-destruction. The blade of his weapon did not penetrate very deep, but M. de Ségur left Prussia.

This occurrence puzzled all the political heads in Europe: nothing could at that time account for the extreme ill-will of the king towards a man so distinguished both by his birth and talents. I have heard

from a very good source an anecdote, which throws some light on this hitherto incomprehensible circumstance. M. de Ségur, at a time when in great favour with the Empress Catherine, had often amused himself by turning into ridicule the nephew of Frederick the Great, afterwards King Frederick William II.: he used to laugh at his love affairs, and even his person; and, in accordance with the taste of the time, he had drawn satirical sketches of this prince, and of his favourites, which he had sent in a note to the Empress.

After the death of Frederick the Great, political circumstances having suddenly changed, the Empress again sought the alliance of Prussia, and in order more promptly to incline the new king to unite with her against France, she sent to him the note of M. de Ségur, whom Louis XVI. had appointed ambassador at Berlin.

Another fact equally curious preceded the arrival of my father at the court of Prussia. It will serve to show the sympathy which the French revolution then excited in the civilised world.

The draught of the treaty of Pilnitz was about being framed, but the allied powers particularly desired to keep France in ignorance of its stipulations as long as possible. The minutes of the treaty were already in the hands of the King of Prussia, and no French agent had as yet obtained any knowledge of them.

One evening, returning home late and on foot, M. de Ségur observed an unknown person wrapped in a cloak, who appeared closely to follow him; he quickened his pace, this person did the same; he crossed

the street, the other crossed with him; he stopped, the mysterious stranger stopped likewise, at a short distance. M. de Ségur, being without arms, and fearful that this rencontre might be connected with the personal ill-will of the king, began to run as he drew near to his own residence, but notwithstanding his haste, he could not prevent the pursuer from arriving at his door, just as it opened. He cast down at the feet of M. de Ségur a roll of papers, and instantly disappeared. The latter, before picking them up, directed several of his people to follow this unknown individual, but they could not overtake him.

The papers contained the *projet* of the treaty of Pilnitz, copied word for word, *in the cabinet of the Prussian king;* and thus it was that France, aided by those who were secret converts to her new doctrines, attained the first information of this celebrated document.

Circumstances more powerful than the talents or the will of men, rendered futile the negotiations of my father with the Berlin cabinet; but notwithstanding the failure of his object, he obtained the esteem, and even the friendship, of all those with whom business brought him into contact, (not excepting the king and the ministers,) which indemnified him, personally, for the ill success of his political mission.

When my father was about to return to his government to give an account of his negotiations, his mother-in-law, then a French refugee at the same court at which he represented France as minister, joined her entreaties to those of his other friends at Berlin, to induce him to change his intentions, forsake the con-

stitutional cause, and remain among the *émigrés* until a more favourable time for serving his country should arrive. These entreaties, though accompanied with the prediction of the evils that would await him on his return, and though the scenes of the 10th of August, the imprisonment of Louis XVI., and the frightful anarchy which reigned throughout France, had terrified all Europe, did not influence my father, or deter him from what he considered his duty to those who had employed him, and to whom he owed an account of his mission. True to the ancient motto of his house — "*Faits ce que doys, adveigne que pourra**," — and, in spite of the prayers of his friends, he departed for the country where the scaffold was preparing for him.

He found public affairs there in such disorder, as to induce him to renounce politics and join the army of the Rhine, commanded by his father, General Custine. There he honourably served as volunteer in two campaigns, and when the General who had opened the road of conquest to our arms returned to Paris to die, his son accompanied him, to defend him, and to share his fate. It is the diplomatic correspondence of my father, during the period of his mission at the court of Berlin, that our present Prussian minister has kindly permitted me to peruse.

These letters are admirable models of diplomatic style. The maturity of mental power, the justice, yet determined energy of character, the extent of information, the clearness and precision of thought which they evince, are really extraordinary, when the age of

* Do thy duty, let come what will.

the writer is considered. M. de Noailles, who was at the time French ambassador at Vienna, expressed in letters (also preserved in our archives at Berlin) sentiments the most flattering to the new diplomatist, to whom he predicted a brilliant career. Little did he imagine how short that career would be!!

The death which my father sought and met in Paris under the influence of a sense of duty, was attended with a circumstance, unknown to the public, that in my opinion invests it with a character of sublimity. The circumstance deserves to be recited at length; but as my other parent will occupy a conspicuous part in the recital, I will first relate another story which will give some idea of her character.

My travels are my memoirs. I do not therefore scruple to commence those to Russia with a history that more concerns myself personally, than the topics on which I shall have to dwell hereafter.

It was while with the army, and before his recall to Paris, that General Custine was apprised of the death of the king. His expressions of indignation on this occasion were not moderated even in presence of the commissioners of the convention. These overheard him say, "I serve my country against foreign invasion, but who would fight for those who now govern us?" These words, reported to Robespierre by Thionville, decided the fate of the General.

My mother at that time lived in a retired manner in a village in Normandy. The moment she learnt the return of General Custine to Paris, this noble-minded young woman conceived it to be her duty to quit her asylum, and her child, who was then quite an infant, to repair to the assistance of her father-in-

law, with whom her family had been for some years on bad terms, owing to a difference in political opinions.

It was a great trial to her to part with me, for she was a mother in the truest sense of the word; but misfortune always had the first claim upon her heart.

Could General Custine have been saved, it would have been by the devotion and courage of his daughter-in-law. Their first interview was most touching. No sooner did the veteran recognise my mother than he believed himself safe. In fact, her youth, her extreme beauty, her mingled heroism and timidity, so interested the journalists, the people, and even the judges of the revolutionary tribunal, that the men who were determined on the death of the General, felt it necessary first to silence the most eloquent of his advocates, his daughter-in-law.

The government, however, at that time, had not thrown off all appearance of law; yet the men who hesitated to throw my mother into prison did not scruple to attempt her assassination. The *Septembriseurs*, as these hired ruffians were called, were placed for several days about the precincts of the Palais de Justice; but though my mother was warned of her danger, nothing could deter her from daily attending the trial, and seating herself at the feet of her father-in-law, where her devoted mien softened even the hearts of his murderers.

Between each sitting of the court she employed her time in privately soliciting the members of the committees and of the revolutionary tribunal. A friend of my father's, in costume *à la carmagnole*, generally accompanied her, and waited for her in the anti-room.

In one of the last sittings of the tribunal her looks

had drawn tears even from the women in the gallery, commonly called "the furies of the guillotine," and the *tricoteuses* of Robespierre. This so enraged Fouquier-Tinville, that he sent secret peremptory instructions to the assassins outside.

After the accused was re-conducted to prison, his daughter-in-law prepared to descend the steps of the palace, in order to regain, on foot and alone — for none dared openly to accompany her — the hackney coach, which waited for her in a distant street. My mother, naturally timid in a crowd, stood trembling at the head of this long flight of steps, pressed on all sides by an enraged and blood-thirsty populace. Her eyes involuntarily sought the spot where Madame de Lamballe had been murdered some time before. She felt her presence of mind departing, as from the ferocious mob the cry, "It is the daughter of the traitor, it is La Custine," mingled with horrid imprecations, reached her ears. How was she to pass through this crowd of infernal, rather than human beings? Already some, with naked swords, had placed themselves before her; others, half clothed, had caused their women to draw back — a certain sign that murder was about to be enacted. My mother felt that the first symptom of weakness she might betray would be the signal for her death: she has often related to me that she bit her hands and tongue so as to bring blood, in her endeavour to preserve a calm countenance at this juncture. At length she observed a fish-woman among the foremost of the crowd. This woman, who was revolting in appearance, had an infant in her arms. Moved by the God of mothers, *the daughter of the traitor* approached this mother, (a mother is

something more than a woman,) and said to her, "What a sweet babe you have in your arms!" "Take it," replied the parent, who understood her by one word and glance; "you can return it to me at the foot of the steps."

The electricity of maternal feeling had thrilled through these two hearts. It communicated itself also to the crowd. My mother took the child, pressed it to her bosom, and held it as an ægis in her arms.

Man, as the child of nature, resumed his superiority over man brutalised under the influence of social evils. The "civilised" barbarians were vanquished by two mothers. She, who was mine, descended, thus rescued, into the court of the Palais de Justice, unsaluted by even an abusive word. She returned the infant to her who had lent it: they parted without interchanging a syllable: the place was not favourable to thanks or explanations, and they never saw each other afterwards; but assuredly the souls of these mothers will meet in another world.

The young woman thus miraculously saved, could not save her father. He died, and to crown the glory of his life, the veteran soldier had the courage to die a Christian. A letter to his son attests this humble sacrifice, the most difficult of all, in an age of practical crimes and philosophical virtues. In proceeding to the scaffold he embraced the crucifix. This religious courage ennobled his death, as much as his military courage ennobled his life; but it gave great offence to the Brutus's of Paris.

During the trial of General Custine, my father had published a sober but manly defence of the former's political and military conduct. This defence, which

had been placarded on the walls of Paris, only served to bring upon the author the hatred of Robespierre. He was imprisoned soon after the death of his father. At this period the Reign of Terror was making rapid progress: to suffer arrest was to receive sentence; the process of trial had become a mere form.

My mother had obtained permission to see her husband daily. Ascertaining that his death was determined, she put in requisition every means that might enable him to escape. By aid of large bribes and larger promises, she won over even the daughter of the gaoler to second her design.

My father was not tall. He was slightly and elegantly made. It was arranged therefore that he should put on the clothes of his wife in the prison, that she should dress herself in those of the gaoler's daughter, and while the latter was to reach the street by another stair, the prisoner and his wife were to pass out together by the ordinary passage, which the two women had been, purposely, in the habit of doing very frequently.

Every thing was duly arranged, and a day fixed, for the execution of this plan. On that day my mother, full of hope that it was her last visit, repaired to the prison, though only on the previous evening the convention had published a decree against all who should aid or connive at the escape of a political prisoner.

This monstrous law was purposely placed before the eyes of the prisoners. My mother, on arriving at the appointed hour, found Louise, the young woman whose good will as well as interested services she had enlisted, in tears, on the prison stairs. Upon

enquiring the cause, she learnt, to her inexpressible surprise, that it was owing to her husband having peremptorily refused to entertain any farther the projected plan of escape. My mother, fearing they had been betrayed, turned, without reply, to gain her husband's apartment. Louise followed her, and apprised her, in a low voice, that he had read the law. She immediately guessed the rest. She knew his inflexible character, and his high and delicate sense of honour: despair almost deprived her of all physical power. "Come with me," she said to Louise, "you will have more influence with him than I; for it is in order to avoid exposing your life that he is about to sacrifice his own."

They both entered together, and a scene commenced which may be better imagined than described. Never but on one single occasion did my mother summon sufficient fortitude to describe it to me. Suffice to say, that nothing could shake the stoical resolution of the young prisoner: the two women on their knees, the weeping wife, the agonized mother reminding him that his child would be an orphan, the stranger urging the utmost willingness to risk her life in his service, — all was unavailing. The sentiments of honour and of duty were stronger in the soul of this man than love of life, than love for a tender and exquisitely beautiful woman, than the impulses of paternal affection. The time accorded to my mother for her visit was passed in useless remonstrances. She had, at length, to be carried out of the chamber. Louise conducted her into the street, where our friend M. Guy de Chaumont Quitry awaited her with an anxiety that may be easily imagined.

"All is lost," said my mother; "he will not save himself."

"I was sure he would not," replied M. de Quitry.

This answer, worthy of the friend of such a man, appears to me almost as sublime as the conduct to which it referred.

And of all this the world has hitherto known nothing. Supernatural virtue passed unobserved in a time when the sons of France were as lavish of their heroism as they had been of their genius fifty years before.

My mother saw her husband but once more after this scene. By means of money she procured permission to bid him the last adieu, when condemned, and in the Conciergerie.

This solemn interview was disturbed by so singular a circumstance, that I have felt some hesitation before concluding to recount it. It will appear like an invention of the tragi-comic genius of Shakspeare, but it is strictly true. In all scenes and circumstances, reality is more strange than fiction.

My mother, Delphine de Sabran, was one of the most lovely women of those times. The devotion she displayed to her father-in-law, assures to her a glorious place in the annals of a revolution in which the heroism of the women has often atoned for the ferocity and fanaticism of the men.

She met my father for the last time, with composure, embraced him in silence, and sat with him for three hours. During this time not a word of reproach was spoken. The, perhaps, too elevated sentiment which had cost him his life was forgiven; not a regret was breathed outwardly: it was felt that the

unhappy victim had need of all his powers to prepare for the sacrifice. But few words passed between the condemned man and his wife. At length my name was pronounced; this was too much—my father entreated pardon — and my mother did not name me again.

In these heroic times death became an exhibition in which the victims felt their honour staked not to betray fear before their executioners. My poor mother respected in her husband, so young, so handsome, so full of mind, and formerly so happy, the necessity he felt for preserving all his courage for the trial of the morrow. The last proof that can be given of an elevated character appeared then a primary duty, even in the eyes of a naturally timid woman: so true it is that the sublime is always within the reach of characters that are sincere! No woman could be more sincere than my mother; and no person could display more energy in trying circumstances. Midnight was drawing nigh, and fearing that her fortitude would support her no longer, she rose to retire.

Their interview had taken place in a room which served as a hall of entrance to several apartments of the prison: it was spacious, and lighted by a single candle. Suddenly, one of the doors, hitherto unnoticed, opened. A man with a dark lantern in his hand, and grotesquely clad, issued from it. He was a prisoner proceeding to visit another in a different apartment. His costume was ludicrous in the extreme, and his visage was highly rouged. This ridiculous apparition appeared before the two young people in the moment of their darkest despair. Without thinking that the object of the rouge was — not to beautify a withered face — but, probably, to prevent a man

of proud spirit from appearing pale before the scaffold of the morrow, they involuntarily burst into a loud and frightful fit of laughter: a nervous electricity triumphed for one moment over the bitterest anguish of the soul. The effort they had so long made to conceal from each other their feelings, had irritated the fibres of the brain: they were thus suddenly overcome by a sense of the ridiculous, the only emotion doubtless for which they were unprepared; and in spite of their efforts, or rather in consequence of their efforts to remain calm, their laughter became inordinate, and speedily degenerated into frightful spasms. The guards, whose revolutionary experience had enlightened them on the nature of this phenomenon, had pity on my mother — greater pity than, on a similar occasion, four years before, the less experienced populace of Paris had for the daughter of M. Berthier. The unhappy wife was carried away in convulsions: such was the last interview of this young couple, and such were the recitals that nursed my infancy. My mother had commanded these subjects never to be named to me, but the common people love to recount the catastrophes they have survived. The servants scarcely spoke to me of any thing but the misfortunes of my parents; and never shall I forget the consequent impression of terror which I experienced in my earliest intercourse with the world.

My first sentiment was that of a fear of life, a sentiment which must be more or less participated in by all, for all have their measure of woes to fill up. It was doubtless this sentiment which taught me to comprehend the Christian religion, before even I had been instructed in it. I felt from my infancy that my lot had been cast in a place of exile.

To return to my father: — After he had regained his composure, he occupied himself with preparing for the stern trial that impended, and towards morning wrote to his wife a letter admirable for the fortitude which it displays. It has been preserved in the Memoirs of the Times, together with that of my grandfather's to this same son; whose death is to be attributed, first, to a sense of duty, which would not permit him to remain a refugee at the Court of Berlin; secondly, to the part he took in the defence of his parent; and, thirdly, to his refusal to save himself at the risk of the life of a young and unknown female.

If his enemies could not speak of his memory without respect, what must have been the sentiments of his friends!

M. Girard, his old tutor, preserved for him the tenderest affection. On being suddenly apprised of his fate, he was seized with an apoplectic fit, and died almost immediately.

My father had a simplicity of manners and a modesty which disarmed envy, at a time when it reigned without control, and which account for the admiration his merits inspired.

He must doubtless have thought more than once during his last night, of the predictions of his friends at Berlin; but I do not believe that he even then repented of the part he had taken. He was one of those with whom life, however bright its hopes, appears little compared with the testimony of a pure conscience. That land is not to be despaired of which produces men in whose hearts the sense of duty is stronger than the sentiments of affection.

CHAP. III.

CONTINUATION OF THE LIFE OF MADAME DE CUSTINE. — HER ARREST. — PROVIDENTIAL CONCEALMENT OF HER PAPERS. — DEVOTION OF NANETTE. — SCENE AT THE TOMB OF MARAT. — MADAME DE BEAUHARNAIS IN PRISON. — ANECDOTES OF PRISON LIFE. — INTERROGATION OF MADAME DE CUSTINE. — INSPIRES ONE OF HER JUDGES WITH THE DESIRE OF SAVING HER. — THE MEANS WHICH HE USES DURING SIX MONTHS TO RETARD HER EXECUTION. — END OF THE REIGN OF TERROR. — CHARACTER OF ROBESPIERRE. — THE PRISONS AFTER HIS FALL. — PETITION OF NANETTE. — EXTRAORDINARY DELIVERANCE OF MADAME DE CUSTINE. — RETURNS TO HER HOUSE. — SICKNESS AND POVERTY. — NOBLE CONDUCT OF JEROME. — HIS AFTER HISTORY. — JOURNEY OF MADAME DE CUSTINE TO SWITZERLAND. — BALLAD OF LE ROSIER. — LAVATER. — MADAME DE CUSTINE UNDER THE EMPIRE. — HER FRIENDS. — DEATH IN 1826.

As I have begun to relate the misfortunes of my family, I will finish the recital. Perhaps this episode of our revolution, as recounted by the son of two individuals who performed conspicuous parts in it, will not be found altogether without interest.

My mother having lost all that could attach her to her country, had now no duty to perform but that of saving her life, and watching over the welfare of her child.

Her situation was, in fact, much worse than that of the other French fugitives. Our name, tainted with Liberalism, was as odious to the aristocrats of that period as to the Jacobins. The prejudiced and intolerant partisans of the old régime, could as little

forgive my parents for the part they had taken at the commencement of the revolution, as could the Terrorists for the moderation of their republican patriotism.

The Girondists, who were the Doctrinaires of this era, would have defended the cause of my father; but that party was annihilated, or had, at least, disappeared since the triumph of Robespierre.

My mother, therefore, found herself in a more isolated position than most of the Jacobin victims. Having devotedly embraced the opinions of her husband, she had been obliged to renounce the society in which her life had been passed, and she had not sought entrance into any other. The remains of those circles which had constituted the *world* of that period — the world, that is to say, of the Faubourg Saint Germain — were not propitiated by our misfortunes; and high aristocrats had well nigh come forth from their hiding-places to join in the chorus of the Marsellaise, when they heard cried in the streets the condemnation of the *traitor* Custine.

The moderate reform party — the men whose love of France exists independently of the form of government adopted by the French — this party, which is now a nation, was not then represented in the country. My father died a martyr in the cause of that unborn nation; and my mother, when only twenty-two years old, had to undergo all the fatal consequences of her husband's virtue — a virtue too lofty to be appreciated by men who could not understand its motives. The energetic moderation of my father was ill understood by his cotemporaries, and his wronged memory attached to the person of his wife, and followed her even to the tomb. Identified

with a name which, in the midst of a world torn by conflicting passions, represented the principle of impartiality, she was abandoned by all parties. Others had the consolation of mourning over their wrongs in company, my mother could only weep alone!

Soon after the catastrophe which rendered her a widow, she became aware of the necessity of leaving France. This, however, required a passport, which it was very difficult to obtain. By means of money she procured a false one, under the name of a dealer in lace about to visit Belgium. It was arranged that my nurse, a faithful servant of our family in Lorraine, and who had brought me to Paris, should proceed with me by way of Alsace to Pyrmont in Westphalia, where we were to meet my mother, and from thence journey together to Berlin, in which city she expected to join her own mother and her brother also. To no other servant but the nurse herself was this plan confided. All preliminary arrangements having been made, Nanette departed with me for the office of the Strasburg diligence, leaving my mother, who was to set out immediately after us on her journey to Flanders, at her lodging in the Rue de Bourbon. She was employing the last minutes that were to precede her departure, in her cabinet, assorting papers and burning such as might compromise others; for among these papers were letters from officers in the army, and from parties already suspected of being aristocrats, of a character that would have sufficed to bring to the guillotine, in four and twenty hours, herself and fifty other individuals.

Seated on a large sofa near to the fire-place, she was busy burning the most dangerous letters, and

placing others, which, as having been written by her parents and dearest friends she felt unwilling to destroy, in a separate box, when suddenly she heard the door of the outer apartment open, and forewarned by one of those presentiments which had never failed to admonish her in moments of danger, she said within herself, "I am betrayed; they are coming to arrest me;" whereupon, without further deliberation, for it was too late to burn the heaps of dangerous documents by which she was surrounded, she gathered them hastily together and stuffed them, with the box also, under the sofa, the hangings of which fortunately reached to the floor.

This accomplished, she arose, and received, with an air of perfect composure, the persons who instantly after entered her cabinet. They were the members of the Committee of General Safety, with their attendants. These beings, whose external appearance was at once ridiculous and terrible, surrounded her with muskets and drawn swords.

"You are under arrest," said the president.

My mother made no answer.

"You are arrested, for intent to emigrate."

"It was my intention," she replied, on seeing her false passport already in the hands of the president; for it had been taken from her pocket by the agent of the municipality, whose first care was to search her person.

At this moment my mother observed that her servants had followed the members of the committee into the room. A single glance sufficed to show her by whom she had been denounced; the face of her *femme de chambre* betrayed the secret of a troubled conscience.

"I pity you," said my mother, addressing this person, who began to cry and to ask for pardon, pleading that she had acted through fear for herself.

"Had you watched me better," replied her mistress, "you would have found that I did not expose you to any risk."

"To which prison will you be conducted?" asked one of the members of the committee; "you are free to choose."

"I have no choice."

Before departing they examined the drawers, cabinets, and each piece of furniture in the room, and searched every where except beneath the sofa. The papers remained where they had been placed. My mother was conveyed to the Carmelite convent, which had been converted into a prison, and on whose walls was still to be seen the blood of the victims of the 2d September, 1792.

Meanwhile the friend who waited for her at the barrier, convinced from her non-appearance that she had been arrested, hurried to the office of the diligence to prevent Nanette from proceeding with me to Strasburg. He arrived in time, and I was taken back to our residence. My mother was no longer there; the seals had already been affixed upon the doors of her apartments; all the servants had been dismissed; not, however, before they had found time to plunder the plate and linen. The house was robbed of all its valuables, and deserted, except by the civic guard, who kept the door. The kitchen was the only room left to us. Here my poor nurse made her bed close to my cradle, and tended me for eight months with the affection of a mother; and

with a devotion that could not have been exceeded had I been a great nobleman.

After the money, which had been destined for our journey, was expended, she supported me by selling, one by one, the articles of her dress. If my mother perished, her intention was to carry me to her own country, and to bring me up among the little peasants of her family. I was at that time two years old. Falling dangerously ill of a malignant fever, she found means to procure for me the attendance of three of the first medical men in Paris. Poor Nanette! she had, indeed, both a generous heart and an energetic character, though the strength of her feelings may not have been equalled by the powers of her intellect.

Her fearlessness made her often very imprudent. During the trial of my grandfather, the people in the streets would often inveigh, in the most violent language, against the *traitor Custine.* Whenever my nurse chanced to hear these imprecations she would stop in the middle of the crowd, demand who dared to say any thing against General Custine, defend him against the accusations of the populace, maintaining that she, who was born his servant, knew him better than they, and conclude by heaping both on them and their revolution the most contemptuous epithets. More than once has she thus incurred danger of being killed in the streets of Paris.

On one occasion, passing with me in her arms across the Place du Carrousel, she observed the women on their knees paying their orisons before the revolutionary shrine of Marat, the martyr of atheism and inhumanity.

By a confusion of ideas, which strikingly exhibits the disorder into which minds were plunged at this epoch, the women, after finishing their prayers, rose, paying a deep reverence to their new saint, and making the sign of the cross.

Nanette was so indignant at this exhibition, that, forgetting I was in her arms, she began to load these new devotees with abuse, and from words soon came to blows. During the struggle she continued faithfully to hold me to her bosom, the fear of my suffering in the contest being her chief care. At length she fell, and the cry of "to the lantern with the aristocrat" resounded from all sides. A woman snatched me from her arms, and she was being dragged along by the hair of her head, when a man, who appeared among the most furious of the crowd, pressed near to her, and contrived to hint in her ear that she should counterfeit insanity, and that he would take care of her child. Nanette began immediately to sing and make many strange grimaces; whereupon her friendly adviser called out "she is mad."—"She is mad; she is mad; let her go," was re-echoed by other voices. Availing herself of this means of escape, she retreated, singing and dancing, towards the Pont Royal, and in the Rue du Bac received me again from the hands of her deliverer.

This lesson served to render Nanette (chiefly through fear for me) more circumspect, but her imprudence became a source of constant alarm to my mother.

The latter, in her prison, derived some consolation from the society of several distinguished female fellow prisoners, who evinced for her the sincerest sympathy.

Among others were Mademoiselle Picot, and Mesdames de Lameth, d'Aiguillon, and de Beauharnais, afterwards the Empress Josephine. This last named lady was placed in the same room with my mother, and they mutually performed for each other the offices of a *femme de chambre.*

With the exception of Madame de Beauharnais, these young and beautiful women took a pride in maintaining a high degree of courage and fortitude. The former exhibited all the thoughtlessness of the creole, and often betrayed a pusillanimity and peevish restlessness that made her companions in misfortune blush. But though she had no magnanimity of character, she was naturally graceful; and gracefulness can dispense with every other qualification. Her mien, her manner, and, above all, her way of speaking, possessed a peculiar charm.

Many curious details connected with the prison life of this period have been written. Had my mother left any memoirs, they would have revealed to the public traits and occurrences still unknown. In the ancient Carmelite convent, among other female prisoners, was an English woman, very old, deaf, and almost blind. She had never been able to learn the reason of her imprisonment; to ascertain which she constantly addressed every one with whom she had an opportunity of speaking. The executioner was the last person who replied to her inquiry.

In the same chamber with this last was the wife of a man who exhibited a puppet-show. They had been arrested, they said, because their puppets were too aristocratic. The woman had a profound respect for the fallen great; and, thanks to this feeling! the

prisoners of noble birth received from her a homage greater than they had ever met with in their own houses.

The plebeian voluntarily waited upon them, and was continually performing little obliging offices, actuated by the pure pleasure of the service: she never approached their persons without testifying marks of the most profound respect; and in finally bidding farewell to these illustrious companions, to proceed with her husband to the place of execution, the poor woman did not for a moment forget to use all those antiquated forms of obeisance with which she was accustomed to address them at other times.

The prisoners, both male and female, used to meet at certain hours in a kind of garden, where the men played at prisoners' bars. It was usually during these moments of recreation that the revolutionary tribunal sent to summon its victims. If the one singled out was in the midst of a game, he bade a simple adieu to his friends, *after which the party continued their play!!* This prison was a world in miniature, of which Robespierre was the god. What could so much resemble hell, as this caricature of providence?

After having been five months in prison, my mother saw M. de Beauharnais depart for the scaffold. In passing her, he presented her with an arabesque talisman set in a ring. She always kept it, and it is now worn by me.

Time was then no longer reckoned by weeks, but by periods of ten days; the tenth was termed *décadi*, and answered to our Sunday, as they neither worked nor guillotined on that day. Its arrival, therefore, as-

sured to the prisoners an existence of twenty-four hours; this appeared an age in prospect, and the day was always viewed as a fête in the prison.

Such was the life of my mother after the death of her husband. It continued during the last six months of the reign of terror. Considering her connections, her celebrity, and the circumstances of her arrest, it was wonderful that she had escaped the scaffold so long. On three different occasions she was taken from prison to her own house, where her inquisitors examined before her, and questioned her upon every insignificant paper which they could find in the drawers and secretaries; searching every corner of the apartment, and omitting only to examine the sofa, which it was the will of God should be overlooked. It may be readily imagined that my mother's heart would irrepressibly beat every time they approached this spot. She has often told me that she did not dare, in one single instance, to look towards the fatal sofa, and yet that she equally feared her eyes might have the appearance of being too consciously averted.

This was not the only token of protection which God vouchsafed her in her misfortunes. The sentiments of the men on whom her fate depended were softened by an invisible power.

Twelve members of the section superintended the searches. They invariably concluded by subjecting the prisoner to a long and scrutinising inquiry. The first time she was thus questioned, the president of this species of revolutionary jury was a little hunch backed shoemaker, who was as malicious as he was ugly. This man had found in a corner, a shoe, which he pretended was made of English leather.

The accusation was serious. My mother at first maintained that the leather was not English, but the shoe-making president insisted on the fact.

"It is possible that it may be," my mother at length conceded; "you ought to know better than I. All that I can say is, that I have never procured any thing from England."

They tried it on her foot: it fitted her. "Who is your shoemaker?" demanded the president. She named him. He had been the fashionable shoemaker at the commencement of the revolution.

"A bad patriot," observed the jealous hump-back.

"A good shoemaker!" remarked my mother.

"We would imprison him," replied the president, "but the aristocrat has concealed himself. Do you know where he is?"

My mother answered in the negative, and intimated that if she did she would not tell.

Her courageous answers, which contrasted strangely with her timid mien; the species of involuntary irony to which these scenes, alike burlesque and tragic in their character, excited her; the exquisite beauty of her person; her youth; her widow's dress; the expression of her face, at once wayward and resigned; her air, lofty in spite of herself; her perfectly easy and elegant manners; her celebrity, already national; the dignity of misfortune; the unequalled accent of her silver voice; and, finally, the instinct of the woman, that constant desire to please, which always succeeds when it is innate and consequently natural, — all contributed to win the hearts of her judges, hard and cruel as they were; in short, all felt favourably disposed towards her except the little hunchback.

My mother had a remarkable talent for drawing, especially for taking likenesses. In the intervals of her examination she amused herself by taking those of the persons who surrounded her, and in a few minutes had made an excellent sketch of the terrible picture in which she was the chief figure.

A master mason, of the name of Jérôme, one of the most ardent jacobins of the day, was present on this occasion. He took the sketch from my mother and passed it to the others; each recognised himself, and all amused themselves at the expense of the president. The rage of the latter might have been fatal to my mother; nevertheless, it was the imprudence she on this occasion committed which saved her life.

The drawing was attached to the other documents connected with her case. Jérôme, the mason, who affected the most violent hostility to her, and who never addressed her without some horrible oath, Jérôme, ferocious though he might be, was young; and, struck with admiration of her many charms, he conceived the idea of saving her from the guillotine.

He had free access to the office of Fouquier Tinville, the public accuser, where lay the box of papers on which were inscribed the names of every prisoner in Paris. These papers were used to furnish the executions of the day, which often reached to the number of sixty or eighty, and the spectacle of which constituted the chief amusement of the people of Paris. The selection of the victims was generally made with little choice, the names that were uppermost being first taken. Jérôme was acquainted with the fatal box: during six months he did not *once fail* to enter the office every evening, and, unobserved, to

place the paper on which was inscribed the name of my mother at the bottom of the box, or, at least, to assure himself that it remained there. When fresh papers were put in, they were, by a species of distributive justice, placed undermost, so that each name should come in its turn. It was the business of Jérôme constantly to search out my mother's, and restore it to the bottom place.

I am now only repeating what I have myself often heard Jérôme relate. He has told me that, at night, when every one had retired, he has often returned to the office, under the fear that some one might at the last moment have disturbed the order of the papers — that order on which the life of my mother entirely depended. In fact on one occasion her name appeared at the top of the pile; Jérôme shuddered, and again placed it under the others.

Neither I nor the friends who listened to this fearful recital dared to ask Jérôme the names of the victims whose death he had hastened in my mother's favour. The latter knew nothing, until after her deliverance from prison, of the stratagem that had saved her life.

When the day of the 9th Thermidor arrived, the prisons were found to be almost emptied; there remained only three sheets in the box of Fouquier Tinville, and it was not likely that many would be added; the bloody spectacles of the Place de la Révolution began to weary the public; and the project of Robespierre and his confidential counsellors was to make an end of the families of the old régime, by commanding a general massacre in the interior of the prisons.

My mother, who contemplated death on the scaffold with such high resolution, has often told me that she felt her courage sink at the idea of being murdered in this manner.

During the last weeks of the Reign of Terror, the old keepers of the Carmelite prison had been replaced by the more ferocious men who were destined to aid in effecting the secret executions. They did not conceal from their victims the plan formed against them; the rules of the prison were made more severe; visitors were no longer admitted; every distant sound the prisoners caught seemed to them the signal of carnage; every night appeared to them the last.

This agony of suspense was relieved the very day that Robespierre fell.

Some who have dealt in over-refined subtleties, in reviewing the history of the Reign of Terror, pretend that Robespierre only fell because he was better than his opponents.

It is true that his accomplices did not become his enemies, until they trembled for their own lives; but in saving themselves they saved France, which would have become a den of wild beasts had Robespierre's plans been carried out. The revolution of the 9th Thermidor was, it is also true, the revolt of a banditti; but surely the fact of their captain having fallen a victim to their conspiracy, does not render him any the worthier character. If misfortune served to justify crime, what would become of the principle of conscience? Equity would perish under the influence of a false generosity—a most dangerous sentiment, for it seduces noble minds, and causes them

to forget that a good man should prefer justice and truth to every other consideration.

It has been said that Robespierre was not naturally cruel. What of that? He was one in whom envy had become omnipotent. Envy, nursed and fed by the well-merited humiliations that this man had endured, under the state of society which preceded the revolution, had suggested to him the idea of a revenge so atrocious, that the meanness of his soul and the hardness of his heart scarcely suffice to persuade us that he was capable of realising it. To write in blood, to calculate by heads, such were the processes of political arithmetic to which France submitted under the government of Robespierre. She does yet worse in the present day — she listens to those who would justify him.

To accept as an excuse for murder, that which renders it the more odious, the *sang froid* and the ulterior plans of the murderer, is to contribute to one of the most crying evils of our age, the perversion of human judgment. The men of the present day, in the decisions dictated by their false sensibility, proceed with an impartiality that annihilates the principles of good and evil; to arrange matters upon earth to their own liking, they have abolished, at one blow, heaven and hell.

Such are the sophisms to which the pretended amelioration of our manners leads — an amelioration which is nothing more than a supreme moral indifference, a deeply-rooted religious incredulity, and an ever-increasing avidity for sensual gratifications; but patience,—the world has ere now recovered from a yet more hopeless state.

Two days after the 9th Thermidor, the greater number of the prisons of Paris were empty. Madame de Beauharnais, through her connection with Tallien, came out in triumph; Mesdames d'Aiguillon and de Lameth were also speedily liberated. My mother was almost the only one left in the Carmelite prison. She beheld her noble companions in misfortune give place to the terrorists, who, after the political revolution that had been effected, daily changed places with their victims. All the friends and relatives of my mother were dispersed; no one thought of her. Jérôme, proscribed, in turn, as a friend of Robespierre, was obliged to conceal himself and could not aid her.

For two months she remained thus abandoned, under a desolation of feeling, that, she has often told me, was more difficult to endure than the previous more immediate sense of peril.

The struggle of parties continued; the government was still in danger of falling again into the hands of the Jacobins. But for the courage of Boissy-d'Anglas, the murder of Feraud had become the signal for a second Reign of Terror, more terrible than the first. My mother knew all this; my illness also, though she did not know its extent, added to her griefs.

At length Nanette, having saved my life by her careful nursing, set seriously about rescuing that of her mist[redacted] She went to the house of one Dyle, a manufacturer of china, in order to consult with about fifty workmen of our province, who were then employed by this rich individual, and who had formerly worked at a porcelain manufactory founded by my grandfather at Niderviller, at the foot of the Vosges,

and subsequently confiscated with his other property.

It was to these men, among whom was Malriat her father, that Nanette applied, urging them to interest themselves in the fate of their former mistress.

They eagerly signed a petition, framed by Nanette, who both spoke and wrote the German-French of Lorraine. This document she herself carried to Legendre, formerly a butcher, and then president of the bureau to which petitions in favour of prisoners were addressed. The paper of Nanette was received and thrown aside, among a multitude of similar petitions.

One evening, three young persons, connected with Legendre, entered the bureau, rather heated with wine, and amused themselves with chasing each other over the tables, and with other similar freaks. In the midst of this sport, some of the surrounding papers were disturbed; one fell, and was picked up by a member of the party. "What have you there?" asked the others.

"No doubt a petition," replied Rossigneux, which was the name of the person addressed,

"Yes; but for what prisoner?"

They called for lights. In the interval of their appearing, the three hot-headed youths took an oath among themselves to obtain, that very evening from Legendre, the signature that would give liberty to the captive, whoever he might be, and to announce to him his freedom within the same hour.

"I swear it, though it should be the liberation of the Prince de Condé," said Rossigneux.

"No doubt," said the others, laughing; "he is no longer a prisoner."

They read the petition; it was that dictated by Nanette, and signed by the workmen of Niderviller.

"How fortunate," shouted the young men; "the lovely Custine, a second Roland! We will go and fetch her from prison in a body."

Legendre returned home at one o'olock in the morning, under the influence of wine like the others. The petition for my mother's liberty was presented by three giddy youths, signed by a drunken man, and at three o'clock in the morning, the former, empowered to open her prison gates, knocked at the door of her apartment.

She at that time slept alone; and would neither open her door, nor consent to leave the prison.

Her liberators explained to her as well as they could, the circumstances of their coming; but she resisted all their urgent entreaties; she feared to enter a hackney coach with strangers in the middle of the night; and all they could obtain from her was the permission to return at the hour of ten.

When she finally left the prison, they related to her, with many details, the circumstances to which the liberation was owing, more especially with the view of proving to her that she had nobody to thank for it; for at that time a species of traffic in liberty was carried on by certain intriguers, who would often extort largely from the liberated parties, for the most part already ruined by the revolution.

A lady of rank, and nearly related to my mother, was not ashamed to ask her for 30,000 francs, which she pretended had been expended in bribes to procure her release. My mother replied by simply relating the story of Rossigneux, and saw her relative no more.

What a scene had she to encounter on returning to her own residence! The house bare and desolate, the seals yet on the doors, and I in the kitchen, still deaf and imbecile, in consequence of the malady that had so nearly ended in my death. My mother had remained firm before the terror of the scaffold, but she sank under this misery. The day after her return she was attacked with jaundice, which lasted five months, and left an affection of the liver, from which she suffered throughout her life.

At the end of six months, the small part of the estate of her husband that had remained unsold, was restored to her. We were then both recovered.

"On what does my lady imagine she has lived, since she left the prison?" asked Nanette, one day.

"I do not know; you must have sold the plate, the linen, or the jewels."

"There were none left to sell."

"Well then, on what?"

"On money which Jérôme forwarded to me every week, with the express command that I was not to mention it to my lady; but now that she can return it, I will tell her the real fact."

My mother had the gratification of saving the life of this man, when proscribed with the terrorists. She concealed him, and aided his escape to America.

He returned under the consulate, with a little fortune which he had made in the United States, and which he afterwards augmented by speculations in Paris. My mother treated him as a friend, and her family loaded him with marks of grateful kindness; yet he would never form one of our society. He used to say to my mother, "I will come and see you

when you are alone, you will always receive me with kindness, for I know your heart; but your friends will regard me as some strange animal; I shall not be at my ease with them. I was not born as you were; I cannot speak as you do." My mother always continued a faithful friend to him. He had the utmost confidence in her, and used often to relate to her his domestic troubles, but never spoke on politics or religion. He died while I was yet a child, about the commencement of the period of the Empire.

My poor mother passed in struggling with poverty the best years of that life which had been so miraculously preserved.

Of the enormously rich estate of my grandfather, nothing remained to us but the debts. The government took the property, but left the task of paying the creditors to those whom it had robbed of the means for so doing.

Twenty years were spent in ruinous lawsuits, with the view of recovering for me some of this estate. My mother was my guardian. Her love for me prevented her ever again marrying; besides, made a widow by the hands of the executioner, she did not feel herself free to act as do other women.

Our involved and complicated affairs were her torment. We were ever kept suspended betwixt fear and hope, and struggling meanwhile with want. At one time riches would appear within our grasp; at another, some unforeseen reverse, some chicanery of the law, deprived us of every prospect. If I have any taste for the elegancies of life, I attribute it to the privations of my early youth.

A year after her liberation, my mother obtained

a passport to proceed to Switzerland. Here her mother and her brother, who did not dare to enter France, awaited her.

Their meeting, notwithstanding the renewal of griefs which it called forth, was a consolation.

Madame de Sabran had, at one time, ceased to hope that she should ever again see her daughter. This meeting was therefore the realisation of the charming ballad of Le Rosier, which had then become celebrated throughout Europe.

My grandmother being unable, as an émigré, to write letters to her daughter during the reign of terror, contrived to have conveyed to her in prison, these beautiful and touching verses.

AIR OF J. JACQUES. — *Je l'ai planté, je l'ai vu naître.*

I.

Est bien à moi, car l'ai fait naître,
Ce beau rosier, plaisirs trop courts!
Il a fallu fuir et peut-être
Plus ne le verrai de mes jours.

II.

Beau rosier cède à la tempête:
Faiblesse désarme fureurs,
Sous les autans courbe ta tête,
Où bien c'en est fait de tes fleurs.

III.

Bien que me fit, mal que me cause
En ton penser s'offrent à moi;
Auprès de toi n'ai vu que roses,
Ne sens qu'épines loin de toi.

IV.

Étais ma joie, étais ma gloire,
Et mes plaisirs et mon bonheur;
Ne périras dans ma mémoire:
Ta racine tient à mon cœur!!

V.

Rosier prends soin de ton feuillage,
Sois toujours beau, sois toujours vert,
Afin que voye après l'orage
Tes fleurs égayer mon hiver.

The wish was accomplished, the rose bush had reflourished, and the united children were again pressed to the bosom of their tender mother.

This Swiss journey was one of the happiest portions of my mother's life; my grandmother was one of the most distinguished and amiable women of her time; and my uncle, the Count Elzéar de Sabran, though younger than his sister, possessed superior and precocious powers of mind.

Lavater was a friend of Madame de Sabran's, who took her daughter to Zurich purposely to present her to this oracle of the philosophy of that day. The great physiognomist, on perceiving her, turned towards Madame de Sabran, observing, "Ah, madame, what a fortunate mother you are! your daughter is transparent! Never have I seen so much sincerity; I can read through her face!"

After her return to France, she devoted herself to two objects, namely, the re-establishment of my fortune, and the direction of my education. I owe to her all that I am, and all that I have. She became also the centre of a circle of distinguished persons, among whom were some of the first men of our country. M. de Châteaubriand continued her friend to the last.

For painting she had almost the talent of an artist, and never passed a day without shutting her-

self up in her studio for several hours. The world she loved not — it frightened, wearied, and disgusted her; she had seen it, in its depths, too early; nevertheless, she was born with, and had ever preserved, that generosity which is the virtue of more prosperous lives.

Her timidity in society was proverbial among her family; her brother used to observe that she had more fear of a *salon* than of the scaffold.

During the whole period of the empire, she and her friends sided with the opposition. After the death of the Duc d'Enghien, she never visited Malmaîson, nor did she ever again see Madame Bonaparte.

In 1811 she made, with me, the tour of Switzerland and Italy. On this occasion she accompanied me every where, and, either on horseback or on foot, crossed the most dangerous passages of the Alps.

We passed the winter at Rome, in a most agreeable society. My mother was no longer young; yet the classic grace of her features made a strong impression on Canova, whose ingenuous character she much admired. One day I said to her, "With your romantic mind, I should not wonder at your marrying Canova."

"Do not be afraid," she replied. "If he were not Marquis d' Ischia, I might be tempted."

I had the happiness of having her life preserved to me until the 13th of July, 1826. She died of the same disease that proved fatal to Bonaparte. This malady, of which the germ had long existed, was accelerated by grief, caused by the death of my wife and only child.

It was in honour of my mother that Madame de

Stael, who knew her well and loved her warmly, gave the name of Delphine to the heroine of her first romance.

At the age of fifty-six years she still retained a beauty that struck even those who had not known her in her youth, and were not, therefore, seduced by the charms of memory.

CHAP. IV.

CONVERSATION AT LUBECK ON PECULIARITIES IN THE RUSSIAN CHARACTER. — JOURNEY FROM BERLIN TO LUBECK. — IMAGINARY EVILS. — TRAVEMUNDE. — CHARACTER OF NORTHERN LANDSCAPES. — HOLSTEIN FISHERMEN. — SUBLIMITY OF FLAT SCENERY. — NIGHTS OF THE NORTH. — IT IS CIVILISATION WHICH HEIGHTENS ADMIRATION OF THE SCENES OF NATURE. — THE STEPPES OF RUSSIA. — BURNING OF THE STEAMER NICHOLAS I. — — ROAD FROM SCHWERIN TO LUBECK. — A GERMAN STATESMAN. — THE FAIR BATH-WOMAN OF TRAVEMUNDE. — REFLECTIONS.

THIS morning, at Lubeck, the landlord of the hotel, hearing that I was going to embark for Russia, entered my room with an air of compassion which made me laugh. This man is more clever and humorous than the sound of his voice, and his manner of pronouncing the French language, would at first lead one to suppose.

On hearing that I was travelling only for my pleasure, he began exhorting me, with the good-humoured simplicity of a German, to give up my project.

"You are acquainted with Russia?" said I to him.

"No, sir; but I am with Russians; there are many who pass through Lubeck, and I judge of the country by the physiognomy of its people."

"What do you find, then, in the expression of their countenance that should prevent my visiting them?"

"Sir, they have two faces. I do not speak of the valets, who have only one; but of the nobles. When they arrive in Europe they have a gay, easy, contented

air, like horses set free, or birds let loose from their cages: men, women, the young and the old, are all as happy as schoolboys on a holiday. The same persons when they return have long faces and gloomy looks; their words are few and abrupt; their countenances full of care. I conclude from this, that a country which they quitted with so much joy, and to which they return with so much regret, is a bad country."

"Perhaps you are right," I replied; "but your remarks, at least, prove to me that Russians are not such dissemblers as they have been represented."

"They are so among themselves; but they do not mistrust us honest Germans," said the landlord, retiring, and smiling knowingly.

Here is a man who is afraid of being taken for a good-natured simpleton, thought I: he must travel himself in order to know how greatly the description, which travellers (often superficial and careless in their observations) give of different nations, tends to influence these nations' character. Each separate individual endeavours to protest against the opinion generally established with respect to the people of his country.

Do not the women of Paris aspire to be simple and unaffected? It may be here observed, that nothing can be more opposite than the Russian and the German character.

My journey from Berlin to Lubeck was very melancholy. An imaginary trouble (at least I still hope that there is no foundation for it) has produced in me one of those nervous agitations, that are more disquieting than the best founded grief.

The imagination well knows how to torment itself.

I shall die, without comprehending why, under the same circumstances, persons whom I love appear to me in danger, and those who are indifferent to me in safety. I have a visionary heart. The silence of a dear friend, after a letter in which he had promised me another by the next courier, suddenly became to me a certain proof that some great misfortune had happened. When once this idea had possessed my mind, I became its prey; my solitary carriage peopled itself with phantoms. In this fever of the soul, fears are no sooner conceived than realised. All is possible; therefore the misfortune is undoubted: thus it is that despair reasons. Who has not felt this torment? but no one feels it so often, so forcibly, as myself. Alas! it is the troubles of the mind that make us fear death; for death only puts an end to those of the body. All this is a dream, yet dreams are warnings: they are more to me than realities, for there is a closer affinity between the phantoms of the imagination and the mind that produces them, than between that mind and the external world.

This morning the fresh air of the fields, the beauty of the heavens, the smooth and tranquil aspect of the landscape on the sweet shores which border the Baltic at Travemunde, have quieted these secret forebodings, and dissipated, as if by enchantment, the unbroken dream which had tormented me for these three days past. It is not because I have wisely reflected — What can reason do against the influences of a supernatural power? but, fatigued with causeless fear, I have become re-assured also without a cause. This repose, therefore, cannot be security. An evil, apprehended without cause, and dissipated without rea-

on, may return; a word, a cloud, the flight of a bird, may persuade me irresistibly that I have no right to be at ease. The same arguments may convince me that I am wrong to be uneasy.

Travemunde has been undergoing improvements for the last ten years, and, what is more, the improvements have not spoilt it. A magnificent road has been completed between Lubeck and the sea; it forms one embowered avenue, under the shade of which the postilions convey you through orchards and hamlets, thinly scattered among the fields, to the mouth of the river. I have seen nothing so pastoral on any other coast. Though the town is lively, the surrounding country is silent and rural; it is a meadow, level with the sea, whose pastures, enlivened by numerous flocks, terminate only where the green turf is bathed by the salt water.

The Baltic here has the appearance of a lake, and its shores have an aspect of tranquillity that appears supernatural. One fancies one's self in the midst of happy shades, in Virgil's Elysian fields. The view of the Baltic Sea, notwithstanding its storms and rocks, inspires me with the idea of security. The waters of the most dangerous gulfs do not convey to the imagination the impression of extension without bounds. It is the idea of infinity which awes the man who stands on the borders of the great ocean.

The tinkling of the sheep-bell mingles with the ringing of the bells on board the steam-boats, in the port of Travemunde. This sudden reminiscence of modern industry, in the midst of a country where a pastoral life is still that of a great part of the population, appears to me poetical without being ex-

citing. This region inspires a healthful repose; it is a refuge from the encroachments of the age, and though level, open to the eye, and easily traversed, one feels here as much in solitude as though in the midst of an island difficult of access, and where man has not disfigured nature. Here repose is inevitable — the mind sleeps and Time folds his wings.

The people of Holstein and Mecklenburg possess a serene kind of beauty, which accords with the gentle and peaceable aspect of their land, and the coldness of their climate. The colour in their cheeks, the even surface of the country, the monotony of their habits, the uniform aspect of the landscape, all is in harmony.

The hardships which the fishermen have to encounter during winter, when, to reach the sea, they have to cross a border of three leagues of ice, whose broken surface often presents chasms that are perilous to overleap, impart a kind of excitement to a life that would be otherwise very monotonous. Without this winter campaign, the inhabitants of the coast would languish in the corner of their huts, wrapped in sheep skins. The opulence of the sea-bathers upon this fine shore, is a source from which the peasants during summer obtain sufficient to supply their necessities for the rest of the year, without exposing themselves to so much peril and fatigue; but man wants more than the necessaries of life. Among the men of Travemunde the winter fishery is the source of every superfluity; the dangers which they voluntarily face during this rude season, enable them to gratify their more elegant tastes. It is for earrings, or a chain of gold for the neck of his mistress, or for

a satin cravat for his own — in short, it is, not to eat, but to adorn himself and those whom he loves, that the fisherman of Travemunde struggles at the peril of his life against the billows and the ice. He would not face this needless danger if he were not something above the mere animal; for the wants of luxury spring from the nobler part of our nature, and can perhaps be subdued only by a sentiment still more noble.

This country pleases me in spite of its uniform aspect. The vegetation is luxuriant. On the fifth of July the verdure still appears fresh; the seringas in the gardens scarcely begin to blossom. The sun in these sluggish climes* is like a great lord, rising late, and showing himself for only a short time. The influences of spring begin but to appear in the month of June, when the days are again about to decline. But if the summer be short, the days are long, and then there reigns a sort of sublime serenity throughout a landscape in which the horizontal sun is scarcely visible, and where the sky is, in itself, the chief object. In viewing this land, level as the sea whose flow it scarcely arrests — a land sheltered alike from the revolutions of nature, and from the troubles of society — we are touched with that kind of admiration which we feel in gazing on the face of a virgin. It is, by comparison, like the pure charm of the eclogue,

* The author, in the remarks which here follow, appears to be alluding rather to the general climate of the Baltic Sea, than to that of its southern coast, which he has been just describing, and to which some of his remarks will not apply. The latitude of Travemunde is very nearly the same as that of York. — *Trans*

after the meretricious adornments of our comedies and romances. It is not picturesque, but rural and pastoral, and yet, not the rural or the pastoral that is seen elsewhere in Europe.

The ten hours' twilight renders a walk at night delicious: at this moment a solemn silence pervades the atmosphere; it is like the suspension of life; nothing speaks to the senses; and my thoughts, lost in the contemplation of the pale stars of the north, soar far above the earth.

But to feel the charm of these illusions, we must come from a distance. Nature is fully appreciated only by civilised strangers; the native rustics do not enjoy, as we do, the world which surrounds them. One of the greatest benefits of society is, that it renders the inhabitants of cities alive to the beauties of the country. It is civilisation which teaches me to be pleased with those lands destined by nature to preserve to us the image of primitive life. I fly from saloons, from conversations, from good hotels and easy roads, in short from all that piques curiosity, or excites admiration in men born in semi-barbarous societies; and, notwithstanding my aversion for the sea, I embark to-morrow in a vessel, all the inconveniences of which I shall brave with joy, provided it bears me toward the deserts and the steppes. The steppes! This eastern word alone inspires the idea of the unknown and the wonderful; it awakens in me a desire, which supplies the place of youth and courage, and which reminds me that I am come into this world only on the condition that I should travel: such is the fatality of my nature. Shall I confess it? I

should perhaps never have undertaken this journey, had it not been for the steppes of Russia!

My carriage is already in the packet-boat: the Russians say it is one of the finest steamers in the world: they call it Nicholas the First. This same vessel was burnt last year crossing from Petersburg to Travemunde: it was refitted, and has since made two voyages.

Some superstitious minds fear that misfortune will yet attach itself to the boat. I, who am no sailor, do not sympathise with this poetic fear; but I respect all kinds of inoffensive superstition, as resulting from the noble pleasure of believing and of fearing, which are the foundation of all piety, and of which, even the abuse, classes man above all other beings in creation.

After a detailed account of the circumstances of the burning of the Nicholas I. had been made to the emperor, he cashiered the captain, who was a Russian, and who was quietly playing at cards in the cabin when the flames burst from the vessel. His friends however state in his excuse, or rather in his praise, that he was acquainted with the danger, and had given private orders to steer the vessel towards a sand-bank on the Mecklenburg coast, his object being to avoid alarming the passengers until the moment of absolute necessity arrived. The flames burst out just as the vessel grounded; most of the passengers were saved, owing chiefly to the heroic efforts of a young and unknown Frenchman. The Russian captain has been replaced by a Dutchman; but he, it is said, does not possess authority over his crew. Foreign countries lend to Russia the men only whom they do not care

to keep themselves. I shall know to-morrow what to think of the individual in question. No one can judge so well of a commander as a sailor or a passenger. The love of life, that love so passionately rational, is a guide by which we can unerringly appreciate the men upon whom our existence depends.

Our noble vessel draws too much water to get up to Petersburg; we therefore change ship at Kronstadt, from whence the carriages will follow us, two days later, in a third vessel. This is tiresome, but curiosity triumphs over all: it is the chief requisite in a traveller.

Mecklenburg is improving. A magnificent road leads from Ludwigslust to Schwerin, where the present Grand Duke has had the good taste to re-establish his residence. Schwerin is ancient and picturesque; a lake, hills, woods, and an antique palace adorn the landscape, and with the city are connected historic associations. All these things are wanting at Ludwigslust.

If you would form some idea of the barbarism of the middle ages, get into a carriage in this old city, the capital of the grand duchy of Mecklenburg, and drive post to Lubeck. If it has rained for twenty-four hours, you must remain half-way on the road: perhaps plunged in deep ruts, which you cannot get out of without breaking or overturning the carriage; there is also danger of being lost in quagmires. This is called the *grand route* from Schwerin to Lubeck: it is sixteen leagues of impracticable road.

To travel safely in Germany it is necessary to know French, and not to forget the difference that

there is between a grande route* and a chaussée. Once leave the chaussée, and you go back three centuries.

This road had, however, been recommended to me by the minister De —— at Berlin, and in a manner that was rather amusing: — "What road would you advise me to take in going to Lubeck?" I asked him.

"They are all bad," replied the diplomatist; "but I advise you to take that of Schwerin."

"My carriage," I replied, "is light, and if it should break down I shall miss the packet. If you know a better route I will take it, even if it be longer."

"All I can say," replied he in an official tone, "is, that I have recommended the same to Monseigneur — (the nephew of his sovereign); you cannot do better than follow him."

"The carriages of princes," I replied, "are perhaps as privileged as their persons. Princes have iron frames, and I would not wish to live for one day as they live the whole year."

No reply was deigned to these words, which I should have thought very innocent if they had not appeared seditious to the German man of office.

This grave and prudent person, distressed at the excess of my audacity, left me the moment he could without too palpable abruptness. There are certain Germans who are born subjects; they are courtiers before they become men. I cannot help laughing at their obsequious politeness, though preferring it

* The "grandes routes" may be considered as meaning the old, wide, and unimproved roads of the country; the chaussées are the more recently cut roads, which are generally raised, drained, and kept in good repair. — *Trans.*

to the contrary disposition, which I blame in the French. But a sense of the ridiculous will always have a strong sway over me, and I still laugh in spite of age and reflection. I should here add, that a road, a real *grande route*, will be before long opened between Lubeck and Schwerin.

The lovely bathing woman of Travemunde, whom we call La Monna Lise, is married: she has three children. I have been to see her in her family, and it was not without a mixture of sadness and timidity that I passed the modest threshold of her new building. She expected me, and with that natural coquetry proper to the people of the north, who, though unimpassioned, are affectionate and sentimental, she had put on her neck a little present which I had given her just ten years before. This charming creature, only thirty-four years of age, has already the gout! One can see that she has been beautiful; and that is all. Beauty not appreciated passes quickly away; it is useless. Lise has a husband, horribly ugly, and three children, one of whom, a boy, almost lives in the sea. In contemplating this family, and calling to mind the memory of Lise ten years before, it appeared to me as though the enigma of human life was for the first time suggested to my mind. I could not breathe in her little cabin, clean and neat as it was. I went out to respire the fresh air, and repeated to myself, "Where there are only the necessaries of life there is nothing. Happy the soul which seeks for a rest in religion." But the religion of Protestants yields only the *necessary*, and nothing beyond.

Since this lovely creature has been tied down to a common lot she lives without trouble, but without

pleasure, which appears to me the greatest trouble of all. I shall never see more, at least I hope not, La Monna Lise of Travemunde.*

How is it that real life resembles so little the life of the imagination? For what end then is this useless, nay mischievous, imagination given? Impenetrable mystery, which unveils itself only by fugitive glimpses to the eye of hope. Man is a galley slave, punished but not amended: in chains for a crime of which he is unconscious, doomed to the punishment of life — that is, to death — he lives and dies without being able to obtain a trial, or even to know of what he is accused. Ah! when one sees nature so arbitrary, how can one wonder at the injustice of society! To discern the existence of equity here below, there needs that eye of faith that pierces beyond the present scene of life.

Justice resides not visibly in this empire of time. Dig into nature, and you soon arrive at fate. A power which would revenge itself on its creation must be limited; but the limits, who has fixed them? The greater the incomprehensibility of the mystery, the greater the necessity, and the greater the triumph of faith.

* The reader is here reminded that this work was addressed originally, in the shape of letters, to a private friend. — *Trans.*

CHAP. V.

POLAR NIGHTS. — MONTESQUIEU AND HIS SYSTEM. — SCENERY OF THE NORTH. — FLATNESS OF THE EARTH'S SURFACE NEAR THE POLE. — SHORES OF FINLAND. — MELANCHOLY OF NORTHERN PEOPLE. — PRINCE K——. — DEFINITIONS OF NOBILITY. — THE ENGLISH NOBILITY. — FREEDOM OF SPEECH. — CANNING. — NAPOLEON. — CONFIDENTIAL CONVERSATION. — GLANCE AT RUSSIAN HISTORY. — INSTITUTIONS AND SPIRIT OF CHIVALRY UNKNOWN IN RUSSIA. — THE NATURE OF AN AUTOCRACY. — POLITICS AND RELIGION ARE IDENTICAL IN RUSSIA. — FUTURE INFLUENCE OF RUSSIA. — FATE OF PARIS. — PRINCE AND PRINCESS D——. — THE COLD-WATER CURE. — GOOD MANNERS OF THE HIGHER ORDERS IN RUSSIA. — SOCIETY IN FRANCE BEFORE THE REVOLUTION. — A MODERN FRENCHMAN OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES. — HIS MAUVAIS TON. — AGREEABLE SOCIETY ON THE STEAM-BOAT. — RUSSIAN NATIONAL DANCES. — TWO AMERICANS. — STEAM-BOAT ACCIDENT. — ISLE OF DAGO.

I AM writing at midnight, *without any lights,* on board the steam-boat Nicholas the First, in the gulf of Finland. It is now the close of a day which has nearly the length of a month in these latitudes, beginning about the 8th of June, and ending towards the 4th of July. By degrees the nights will reappear; they are very short at first, but insensibly lengthen as they approach the autumnal equinox. They then increase with the same rapidity as do the days in spring, and soon involve in darkness the north of Russia and Sweden, and all within the vicinity of the arctic circle. To the countries actually within this circle, the year is divided into a day and a night, each of six months'

duration. The tempered darkness of winter continues as long as the dubious and melancholy summer light.

I cannot yet cease from admiring the phenomenon of a polar night, whose clear beam almost equals that of the day. Nothing more interests me than the different degrees in which light is distributed to the various portions of the globe. At the end of the year, all the opposite parts of the earth have beheld the same sun during an equal number of hours; but what a difference between the days! what a diversity also of temperature and of hues! The sun, whose rays strike vertically upon the earth, and the sun whose beams fall obliquely, does not appear the same luminary, at least if we judge by effects.

As for myself, whose existence bears a sympathetic analogy to that of plants, I acknowledge a kind of fatality in climates, and, impelled by the influence the heavens have over my mind, willingly pay respect to the theory of Montesquieu. To such a degree are my temper and faculties subject to the action of the atmosphere, that I cannot doubt of its effects upon politics. But the genius of Montesquieu has exaggerated and carried too far the consequences of this belief. Obstinacy of opinion is the rock on which genius has too often made shipwreck. Powerful minds will only see what they wish to see: the world is within themselves; they understand every thing but that which is told to them.

About an hour ago I beheld the sun sinking in the ocean between the N.N.W. and N. He has left behind a long bright track which continues to light me at this midnight hour, and enables me to write upon

deck while my fellow-passengers are sleeping. As I lay down my pen to look around, I perceive already, towards the N.N.E. the first streaks of morning light. Yesterday is not ended, yet to-morrow is begun. The sublimity of this polar scene I feel as a compensation for all the toils of the journey. In these regions of the globe the day is one continued morning, which never performs the promises of its birth. This singular twilight precedes neither day nor night; for the things which bear those names in southern countries have in reality no existence here. The magic effects of colour, the religious dimness of night, are forgotten; nature appears no longer a painting, but a sketch; and it is difficult to preserve belief in the wonders of those blest climates where the sun reigns in his full power.

The sun of the north is an alabaster lamp, hung breast-high, and revolving between heaven and earth. This lamp, burning (for weeks and months) without interruption, sheds its melancholy rays over a vault which it scarcely lightens; nothing is bright, but all things are visible. The face of nature, everywhere equally illuminated by this pale light, resembles that of a poet rapt in vision and hoary with years. It is Ossian who remembers his loves no more, and who listens only to the voices of the tombs.

The aspect of these unvaried surfaces — of distances without objects, horizons undefined, and lines half effaced — all this confusion of form and colouring, throws me into a gentle reverie, the peaceful awakening from which is as like death as life. The soul resembles the scene, and rests suspended between day and night — between waking and sleep-

ing. It is no lively pleasure that it feels; the raptures of passion cease, but the inquietude of violent desires ceases also. If there is not exemption from ennui, there is from sorrow; a perpetual repose possesses both the mind and the body, the image of which is reflected by this indolent light, that spreads its mortal coldness equally over day and night, over the ocean and the land, blended into one by the icy hand of winter, and the overspreading mantle of the polar snows.

The light of these flat regions near the pole accords well with the bright blue eyes, the inexpressive features, the pale locks, and the timidly romantic imagination of the women of the north. These women are for ever dreaming what others are enacting; of them more especially can it be said, that life is but the vision of a shadow.

In approaching these northerly regions you seem to be climbing the platform of a chain of glaciers; the nearer you advance, the more perfectly is the illusion realised. The globe itself seems to be the mountain you are ascending. The moment you attain the summit of this large Alp, you experience what is felt less vividly in ascending other Alps: the rocks sink, the precipices crumble away, population recedes, the earth is beneath your feet, you touch the pole. Viewed from such elevation, the earth appears diminished, but the sea rises and forms around you a vaguely defined circle; you continue as though mounting to the summit of a dome — a dome which is the world, and whose architect is God.

From thence the eye extends over frozen seas and crystal fields, in which imagination might picture the

abodes of the blest, unchangeable, inhabitants of an immutable heaven.

Such were the feelings I experienced in approaching the Gulf of Bothnia, whose northern limits extend to Torneo.

The coast of Finland, generally considered mountainous, appears to me but a succession of gentle, imperceptible hills; all is lost in the distance and indistinctness of the misty horizon. This untransparent atmosphere deprives objects of their lively colours; every thing is dulled and dimmed beneath its heavens of mother-of-pearl. The vessels, just visible in the horizon, quickly disappear again; for the glimmering of the perpetual twilight, to which they here give the name of day, scarcely lights up the waters; it has not power to gild the sails of a distant vessel. The canvas of a ship under full sail in northern seas, in place of shining as it does in other latitudes, is darkly figured against the grey curtain of heaven, which resembles a sheet spread out for the representation of Chinese figures. I am ashamed to confess it, but the view of nature in the north reminds me, in spite of myself, of an enormous magic lantern, whose lamp gives a bad light, and the figures on whose glasses are worn with use. I dislike comparisons which degrade the subject; but we must, at any rate, endeavour to describe our conceptions. It is easier to admire than to disparage; nevertheless, to describe with truth, the feeling that prompts both sentiments must be suffered to operate.

On entering these whitened deserts, a poetic terror takes possession of the soul: you pause, affrighted, on the threshold of the palace of winter. As you ad-

vance in these abodes of cold illusions, of visions, brilliant, though with a silvered rather than a golden light, an indefinable kind of sadness takes possession of the heart; the failing imagination ceases to create, or its feeble conceptions resemble only the undefined forms of the wanly glittering clouds that meet the eye.

When the mind reverts from the scenery to itself, it is to partake of the hitherto incomprehensible melancholy of the people of the north, and to feel, as they feel, the fascination of their monotonous poetry. This initiation into the pleasures of sadness is painful while it is pleasing; you follow with slow steps the chariot of death, chaunting hymns of lamentation, yet of hope; your sorrowing soul lends itself to the illusions around, and sympathises with the objects that meet the sight: the air, the mist, the water, all produce a novel impression. There is, whether the impression be made through the organ of smell or of touch, something strange and unusual in the sensation: it announces to you that you are approaching the confines of the habitable world; the icy zone is before you, and the polar air pierces even to the heart. This is not agreeable, but it is novel and very strange.

I cannot cease to regret having been detained so long this summer, on account of my health, at Paris and at Ems. Had I followed my first plan, I should now be in Lapland, on the borders of the White Sea, beyond Archangel; but it will be seen from the above, that I feel as though there, which is the same thing.

Descending from the elevation of my illusions, I

find myself, not among the deserts of the earth, but travelling on the superb steam-boat Nicholas the First, and in the midst of as refined a society as I have met with for a long time.

He who could embody in the style of Boccaccio the conversations in which I have taken a very modest part during the last three days, might make a book as brilliant and amusing as the Decameron, and almost as profound as La Bruyère.

I had been long an invalid. At Travemunde I was so ill that, on the very day for sailing, I thought of renouncing the journey. My carriage had been placed on board, but I felt the cold fit of fever thrilling through my veins, and I feared to increase the sickness that already tormented me, by the sea-sickness that I knew I could not escape. What should I do at Petersburg, eight hundred leagues from home, were I to fall seriously ill. To embark with a fever on a long journey — is it not an act of insanity? Such were my thoughts. But, then again, would it not seem yet more absurd to change my mind at the last moment, and have my carriage brought back on shore? What would the people of Travemunde say? How could my irresolution be explained to my friends at Paris?

I am not accustomed to be governed by reasonings of this character, but I was sick and reduced in strength: the shiverings also increased; an inexpressible languor, an utter distaste for food, and severe pains in the head and side, made me dread a passage of four days. I shall not survive it, said I to myself; yet to change a project is as difficult for invalids as for other men.

The waters of Ems have, in curing one disease, substituted another. To cure this second malady, rest is necessary. Is not this a reason for deferring a visit to Siberia? and yet I am going there.

Under the influence of these conflicting considerations, I was absolutely incapable of deciding how to act.

At length, determined to guide, as by the rules of a game of chance, the plans of a life which I no longer knew how to guide otherwise, I called my servant, resolved that he should decide the question. I asked his opinion.

"We must go on," he replied; "it is so near the time of starting."

"Why, you are generally afraid of the sea."

"I am afraid of it still; but were I in the place of my master, I would not change my mind after having sent my carriage on board."

"You seem more afraid of my changing my mind than of my becoming seriously ill."

No answer.

"Tell me, then, why you would go on?"

"Because ——!!!"

"Very good! we will proceed."

"But if you should become worse," resumed this worthy personage, who began to shrink from the responsibility that would attach to him, "I shall reproach myself with your imprudence."

"If I am ill, you will take charge of me."

"But that will not cure you."

"Never mind; we will go."

Thus moved by the eloquence of my servant, I proceeded on board, carrying with me a fever, low

spirits, and inexpressible regret for the weakness I had exhibited. A thousand unpleasant presentiments connected with my journey assailed me, and, as they weighed anchor, I covered my eyes in a fit of stupid despair. The instant the paddles began to turn, a revolution, as sudden and complete as it was inexplicable, took place in my frame: the pains and shivering disappeared, my mind resumed its usual powers, and I found myself suddenly in perfect health. This change appeared to me so singular, that I cannot resist recording it, though at the risk perhaps of not being believed.

Among the passengers on board the steamer I observed an elderly man, whose immensely swollen legs could hardly support his corpulent frame. His head, well set between his large shoulders, had a noble cast: it was a portrait of Louis XVI.

I soon learnt that he was the Russian Prince K——, a descendant of the conquering Varegues, and therefore one of the most ancient of the Russian nobility.

As I observed him, supported by his secretary, and moving with difficulty towards a seat, I could not help saying to myself, here is a sorry travelling companion; but on hearing his name, which I well knew by reputation, I reproached myself for this incorrigible mania of judging by appearances.

As soon as seated, the old gentleman, the expression of whose face was shrewd, although noble and sincere, addressed me by name.

Apostrophised thus suddenly, I rose without replying. The prince continued in that truly aristo-

cratic tone, the perfect simplicity of which excludes all idea of ceremony:—

"You, who have seen almost all Europe, will, I am sure, be of my opinion."

"On what subject, my prince?"

"On England. I was saying to Prince ——, here," indicating with his finger, and without further presentation, the individual with whom he was talking, "that there is no noblesse among the English. They have titles and offices; but the idea which we attach to a real order of nobility, distinguished by characteristics which can neither be purchased nor conferred, is unknown to them. A monarch may create a prince; education, circumstances, genius, virtue, may make a hero; but none of these things are sufficient to constitute a nobleman."

"Prince," I replied, "a noblesse, in that meaning of the word which was once understood in France, and in which you and I, I believe, understand it at present, has become a fiction, and was perhaps always one. You remind me of the observation of M. de Lauraguais, who said, on returning from an assembly of the marshals of France, 'we were twelve dukes and peers, but I was the only gentleman.'"

"He said the truth," replied the prince. "On the Continent, the gentleman alone is considered as noble*, because in countries where nobility is still something real, it is inherent in the blood, and not in fortune, favour, talent, or avocation; it is the produce of history; and, as in physics, the period for the formation of certain metals appears to have ceased, so in communities the period for the creation of noble families

* Gentilhomme, *i. e.* person of ancient family. —*Trans.*

has ceased also. It is this of which the English are ignorant."

"It is true," I answered, "that though still preserving much feudal pride, they have lost the spirit of feudal institutions. In England, chivalry has ceded to industry, which has readily consented to take up its abode in a baronial constitution, on condition that the ancient privileges attached to names should be placed within reach of newly founded families.

"By this social revolution, the result of a succession of political changes, hereditary rights are no longer attached to a class, but are transferred to individuals, to offices, and to estates. Formerly the warrior ennobled the land that he won; now it is the possession of the land which constitutes the noble; and what is called a nobility in England, appears to me to be nothing more than a class that is rich enough to pay for wearing a certain dress. This monied aristocracy differs, no doubt, very greatly from the aristocracy of blood. Rank that has been bought, is an evidence of the intelligence and activity of the man; rank that has been inherited is an evidence of the favour of Providence. *

"The confusion of ideas respecting the two kinds of aristocracy, that of money and that of birth, is such in England, that the descendants of a family, whose name belongs to the history of the country, if they happen to be poor and are without title, will tell you they are not noble; while my Lord —— (grandson of a tailor), forms, as member of the house of peers, a part of the high aristocracy of the land."

* Atteste la faveur de la Providence

"I knew that we should agree," replied the prince, with a graceful gravity that is peculiar to him.

Struck with this easy manner of making acquaintance, I began to examine the countryman of the Prince K——, Prince D——, the celebrity of whose name had already attracted my attention. I beheld a man still young: his complexion wore a leaden hue; a quiet patient expression was visible in his eye; but his forehead was full, his figure tall, and throughout his person there was a regularity which accorded with the coldness of his manners, and the harmony produced by which was not unpleasing.

Prince K——, who never tired of conversation, continued: —

"To prove to you that the English notions of nobility differ from ours, I will relate a little anecdote which will perhaps amuse you.

"In 1814 I attended the Emperor Alexander on his visit to London. At that time his majesty honoured me with much confidence, which procured for me many marks of kindness on the part of the Prince of Wales, then regent. This prince took me aside one day, and said to me, 'I should like to do something that would be agreeable to the emperor. He appears to have a great regard for the physician who accompanies him; could I confer on this person any favour that would please your master?'

"'You could, sir,' I replied.

"'What, then, should it be?'

"'Nobility.'

"On the morrow the doctor was made a knight. The emperor took pains to ascertain the nature of the distinction which thus constituted his physician a

Sir, and his physician's wife, a Lady; but, although his powers of comprehension were good, he died without being able to understand our explanations, or the value of the new dignity conferred upon his medical man."

"The ignorance of the Emperor Alexander," I replied, "is justified by that of many well-informed men: look at the greater number of novels in which foreigners attempt to depict English society." This discourse served as a prelude to a most agreeable conversation, which lasted several hours. The tone of society among the higher ranks in Russia is marked by an easy politeness, the secret of which is almost lost among ourselves.

Every one, not even excluding the French secretary of Prince K., appears modest, superior to the little cares and contrivances of vanity and self-love, and consequently, exempt from their mistakes and mortifications. If it is this that one gains from living under a despotism, *vive la Russie!** How can polished manners subsist in a country where nothing is respected, seeing that *bon ton* is only discernment in testifying respect. Let us begin again by showing respect to those who have a right to deference, and we shall again become naturally, and so to speak, involuntarily polite.

Notwithstanding the reserve which I threw into

* The author here requests a liberal construction on the part of the reader, in order to reconcile his apparent contradictions. It is only from a frank statement of the various contradictory views that present themselves to the mind that definitive conclusions are eventually to be attained.

my answers to the Prince K——, the old diplomatist quickly discovered the tendency of my views.

"You do not belong either to your country or to your age," said he, "you are an enemy to the power of speech as a political engine."

"It is true," I replied; "any other way of ascertaining the worth of men appears to me preferable to public speaking, in a country where self-love is so easily excited as in mine. I do not believe that there could be found in France many men who would not sacrifice their most cherished opinions to the desire of having it said that they had made a good speech."

"Nevertheless," pursued the liberal Russian prince "everything is included in the gift of language; everything that is in man, and something even beyond, reveals itself by discourse: there is divinity in speech."

"I agree with you," I replied; "and it is for that very reason that I dread to see it prostituted."

"When a genius like that of Mr. Canning's," continued the prince, "enchained the attention of the first men of England and of the world, surely political speech was something great and glorious."

"What good has this brilliant genius produced? And what evil would he not have caused if he had had inflammable minds for auditors? Speech employed in private, as a means of persuasion, to change the direction of ideas, to influence the action of a man, or of a small number of men, appears to me useful, either as an auxiliary, or as a counterbalance to power; but I fear it in a large political assembly whose deliberations are conducted in public. It too often secures a triumph to limited views and fallacious popular notions, at the expense of lofty,

far-sighted conceptions, and plans profoundly laid. To impose upon nations the domination of majorities is to subject them to mediocrity. If such is not your object, you do wrong to laud oratorical influence. The politics of large assemblies are almost always timid, sordid, and rapacious. You oppose to this the case of England: that country is not what it is supposed to be. It is true that in its houses of parliament questions are decided by the majority; but this majority represents the aristocracy of the land, which for a long time has not ceased, except at very brief intervals, to direct the affairs of the state. Besides, to what refuges of lies have not parliamentary forms compelled the leaders of this masked oligarchy to descend? Is it for this that you envy England?"

"Nevertheless, man must be led either by fear or by persuasion."

"True; but action is more persuasive than words. Does not the Prussian government prove this? Does not Buonaparte? Buonaparte at the commencement of his reign governed by persuasion as much as, or more than, by force, and yet his eloquence, though great, was never addressed except to individuals; to the mass he never spoke except by deeds: to discuss the laws in public is to rob them of that respect which is the secret of their power."

"You are a friend to despotism?"

"On the contrary, I dread the lawyers, and their echo the newspapers*, which are but speeches whose echo resounds for twenty-four hours. Such is the despotism which threatens us in the present day."

* These allusions, it must be remembered, refer more especially to France. — *Trans.*

"Come among us, and you will learn to fear some other kinds."

"It will not be you, prince, who will succeed in imbuing me with a bad opinion of Russia."

"Do not judge of it, either by me, or by any other Russian who has travelled: our natural flexibility renders us cosmopolites the moment we leave our own land; and this disposition of mind is in itself a satire against our government!"

Here, notwithstanding his habit of speaking openly on all subjects, the prince began to distrust both himself, me, and every one else, and took refuge in some remarks not very conspicuous for their perspicuity. He afterwards, however, availed himself of a moment when we were alone to lay before me his opinion as to the character of the men and the institutions of his country. The following, as nearly as I can recollect, forms the sum of his observations.

"Russia, in the present age, is only four hundred years removed from the invasions of barbarian tribes, whilst fourteen centuries have elapsed since western Europe experienced the same crisis. A civilisation older by one thousand years of course places an immeasurable distance between the manners of nations.

"Many ages before the irruption of the Mongols, the Scandinavians placed over the Slavonians (then altogether savages) chieftains, who reigned at Great Novogorod and at Kiew, under the name of Varegues. These foreign heroes, supported by a small retinue of armed followers, became the first princes of the Russians; and their companions in arms are the stock whence proceeds the more ancient nobility. The Varegue princes, who were a species of demi-

gods, governed this nation while still composed of wandering tribes. It was from the emperors and patriarchs of Constantinople that they at this period derived all their notions of luxury and the arts. Such, if I may be allowed the expression, was the first laid stratum of civilisation in Russia, afterwards trampled on and destroyed by the Tartar conquerors.

"A vast body of saints, who were the legislators of a newly converted Christian people, illume, with their names, this fabulous epoch of Russian history. Princes also, great by their savage virtues, ennoble the early period of the Slavonian annals. Their names shine out from the profound darkness of the age, like stars piercing the clouds of a stormy night. The very sound of these strange names excites the imagination and challenges curiosity. Rurick, Oleg, the Queen Olga, Saint Wladimir, Swiatopolk, and Monomaque, are personages whose characters no more resemble those of the heroes of the west than do their appellations.

"They have nothing of the chivalrous about them; they are like the monarchs of Scripture; the nation which they rendered great remained in the vicinity of Asia; ignorant of our romance, it preserved manners that were in a great measure patriarchal.

"The Russian nation was not formed in that brilliant school of good faith, by whose instructions chivalrous Europe had so well profited, that the word *honour* was for a long period synonymous with truth, and the *word of honour* had a sanctity which is still revered, even in France, where so many things have been forgotten.

"The noble influence of the Knights of the Cross

stopped, with that of Catholicism, in Poland. The Russians are warriors, but they fight under the principle of obedience, and with the object of gain; the Polish chevaliers fought for the pure love of glory; and thus, though these people spring from the same stock, and have still many points of resemblance, the events of history have separated them so widely that it will require a greater number of ages of Russian policy to reunite them than it has required of religion and of social habitudes to part them asunder.

"Whilst Europe was slowly recovering from the efforts she had made during centuries to rescue the tomb of Christ from the unbelievers, Russia was paying tribute to the Mohammedans under Usbeck, and at the same time drawing her arts and sciences, her manners, religion, and politics, as also her principles of craft and fraud, and her aversion to the Latin cross, from the Greek empire. If we reflect on all these civil, religious, and political influences, we shall no longer wonder at the little confidence that can be placed in the word of a Russian (it is the Russian prince who speaks), nor that the Russian character in general should bear the impress of that false Byzantine stamp which influences social life even under the empire of the Czars—worthy successors of the lieutenants of Batî.

"The unmitigated despotism that reigns over us established itself at the very period that servitude ceased in the rest of Europe. From the time of the invasion of the Mongols, the Slavonians, until then one of the freest people in the world, became slaves, first to their conquerors, and afterwards to their own princes. Bondage was thenceforward established

among them, not only as an existing state, but as a constituent principle of society. It has degraded the right of speech in Russia to such a point that it is no longer considered anything better than a snare: our government lives by lies, for truth is as terrible to the tyrant as to the slave. Thus, little as one speaks, in Russia, one always speaks too much, since in this country all discourse is the expression of religious or political hypocrisy."

"Prince," I replied, after having listened attentively to this long series of deductions, "I will not believe you. It is enlightened to rise above national prejudices, and polite to deal gently with the prejudices of foreigners; but I have no more confidence in your concessions than I have in others' claims and pretensions."

"In three months you will render me greater justice; meanwhile, and as we are yet alone," — he said this after looking round on all sides, — "I will direct your attention to a leading point, I will present you with a key which will serve to explain every thing to you in the country you are about to visit.

"Think at each step you take among this Asiatic people that the chivalrous and Catholic influence has never obtained in their land; and not only have they never adopted it, they have withstood it also, with bitter animosity, during long wars with Lithuania, Poland, and the knights of the Teutonic order."

"You make me proud of my discernment. I wrote lately to one of my friends that I conceived religious intolerance to be the secret spring of Russian policy.

"You anticipated clearly what you are going to see; you can have no adequate idea of the intense intolerance of the Russians; those whose minds are

cultivated, and whom business brings into intercourse with western Europe, take the utmost pains to conceal the predominant national sentiment, which is the triumph of the Greek *orthodoxy* — with them synonymous with the policy of Russia.

"Without keeping this in view nothing can be explained either in our manners or our politics. You must not believe, for example, that the persecutions in Poland were the effect of the personal resentment of the Emperor: they were the result of a profound and deliberate calculation. These acts of cruelty are meritorious in the eyes of true believers; it is the Holy Spirit who so enlightens the sovereign as to elevate him above all human feelings; and it is God who blesses him as the executor of his high designs. By this manner of viewing things, judges and executioners become so much the greater saints as they are greater barbarians. Your legitimist journals little know what they are doing when they seek for allies among schismatics. We shall see an European revolution before we shall see the Emperor of Russia acting in good faith with a Catholic power; the Protestants are at least open adversaries; besides, they will more readily reunite with the pope than the chief of the Russian autocracy; for the Protestants, having beheld all their creeds degenerate into systems, and their religious faith transformed into philosophic doubt, have nothing left but their sectarian pride to sacrifice to Rome; whereas the Emperor possesses a real and positive spiritual power, which he will never voluntarily relinquish. Rome, and all that can be connected with the Romish church, has no more dangerous enemy than the autocrat of Moscow—visible

head of his own church; and I am astonished that Italian penetration has not discovered the danger that threatens you from that quarter. After this veracious picture, judge of the illusion with which the Legitimists of Paris nurse their hopes."

This conversation will give an idea of all the others. Whenever the subject became unpleasant to Muscovite self-love, the prince K—— broke off, at least until he was fully sure that no one overheard us.

The subjects of our discourse have made me reflect, and my reflections make me fear.

There is perhaps more to look forward to in this country, long depreciated by our modern thinkers, because appearing so far behind all others, than in those English colonies implanted on the American soil, and which are too highly vaunted by the philosophers whose systems have developed the real democracy, with all its abuses, which now subsists.

If the military spirit which prevails in Russia has failed to produce anything analogous to our creed of honour, or to invest its soldiers with the brilliant reputation which distinguishes ours, it should not therefore be said that the nation is less powerful. Honour is a human divinity, but in practical life duty outvalues even honour; though not so dazzling it is more sustained, and more capable of sustaining.

In my opinion the empire of the world is henceforth no longer to be committed to the turbulent, but to people of a patient spirit.* Europe, enlightened

* I must again request the reader, who would follow me throughout this work, to wait before forming an opinion of Russia, until he shall have compared my different views made

as she now is, will no longer submit, except to real strength: now the real strength of nations is obedience to the power which rules them, just as discipline is the strength of armies. Henceforth falsehood will react so as to produce most injury to those who would make it their instrument; truth will give birth to a new influence, so greatly will neglect and disuse have renewed its youth and vigour.

When our cosmopolitan democracies, bearing their last fruits, shall have made war a detested thing to all people,—when nations once the most civilised of the earth shall by their political debaucheries have brought themselves to a state of enervation, and from one fall to another sunk into internal lethargy and external contempt, then—all alliance being admitted impossible with societies steeped in helpless egotism, the flood gates of the north will again open upon us, and we shall have to endure a last great invasion, an invasion of no longer ignorant barbarians, but of a people more enlightened and instructed than ourselves, for they will have been taught, by our excesses, the means and the mode of ruling over us.

It is not without design that Providence is accumulating so many inactive instruments of power in Eastern Europe. A day will come when the sleeping giant will rise up, and when force will put an end to the reign of speech. Vainly, at that time, will dismayed equality call upon the old aristocracy to rise in rescue of liberty. Arms in the hands

before and after my journey. The candour and good faith with which I profess to write forbid me to retrench anything that I have already written.

of those too long unaccustomed to their use will be weak and powerless. Society will perish for having put its trust in empty words, and then those lying echoes of opinion, the journals, will revel in the overthrow, were it only to have something to relate for one month longer. They will kill society in order to live upon its carcase.

Germany, with its enlightened governments, its good and sensible people, might again lay in Europe the foundations of a defensive aristocracy *, but its governments are not one with its people. The king of Prussia, become the mere advance guard of Russia †, has converted his soldiers into silent and patient revolutionists, instead of having availed himself of their good dispositions to render them the natural defenders of ancient Europe,—that only portion of the earth where rational liberty has hitherto discovered an asylum. In Germany it might yet be possible to allay the storm; in France, England and Spain, we can now do no more than await the thunder-bolt. A return to religious unity would save Europe. But this unity, by what means can it be restored, by what new miracles will it enforce its claims on an indifferent and thankless world; by what authority will it be supported? This is a secret with God. The human mind proposes problems, it is the Divine action, that is to say, it is time, which must resolve them.

These considerations fill me with painful apprehensions for my own country. When the world, wearied

* Une aristocratie tutélaire.

† This was written in June 1839.

with half measures shall have taken one step towards the truth, — when religion shall be recognised as the only important principle of society, actuated no longer by perishable, but by real, that is, eternal interests, — Paris, frivolous Paris, exalted so proudly under the reign of a sceptical philosophy, Paris, the wanton capital of indifference and of cynicism, will it preserve its supremacy amid generations taught by fear, sanctified by chastisements, undeceived by experience, and perfected by meditation ?

The reaction would have to proceed from Paris itself. Dare we hope for such a prodigy ? Who will assure us that at the termination of the epoch of destruction, and when the new light of faith shall illume the heart of all Europe, the centre of civilisation shall not be removed ? Who, in short, shall say, whether France, cast off for her impiety, will not then become to the regenerated Catholics what Greece was to the early Christians, the ruined temple of pride and eloquence ? What right has she to hope for immunity ? Nations die like individuals, and volcanic nations die quickly.

Our past was so brilliant, our present is so tarnished, that instead of boldly invoking the future, we ought to look forward to it with fear. I avow it, from henceforth, that my fears for my country exceed my hopes ; and the impetuosity of that *young France*, which, under the bloody reign of the Convention, promised such glorious triumphs, now appears to me as the symptom of dotage and decay. Yet the present state of things, with all its evils, is better *for us* than the era which it presages, and from which I essay in vain to turn away my thoughts.

The curiosity which I feel to see Russia, and the admiration with which the spirit of order that must govern the administration of so vast a state inspires me, does not prevent my judging impartially of the policy of its government. The domination of Russia when confining itself to diplomatic efforts, without proceeding to actual conquest, appears to me that which is most to be dreaded by the world. There is much misapprehension as regards the part which this state would play in Europe. In accordance with its constitutional character, it would represent the principle of order, but influenced by the character of its rulers, it seeks to propagate tyranny under pretext of remedying anarchy; as though arbitrary power could remedy any evil! It is the elements of moral principle that this nation lacks; with its military habits, and its recollections of invasions it is still occupied with notions of wars of conquest, the most brutal of all wars, whereas the struggles of France and the other western nations will henceforth assume the character of wars of propagandism.

The number of passengers whom I have fallen in with on board the Nicholas I. is fortunately few. There is a young princess D —— accompanying her husband on his return to St. Petersburg, a charming person, in appearance quite the heroine of a Scottish romance.

This amiable couple, accompanied also by the brother of the princess, have been passing several months in Silesia, subjecting themselves to the treatment of the famous cold water remedy. It is more than a remedy, it is a sacrament: it is medical baptism.

In the fervour of their faith, the prince and prin-

cess entertained us with wonderful results obtained by this mode of cure. The discovery is due to a peasant, who professes to be superior to all the doctors in the world, and justifies his pretensions by his works. He believes in himself; this example communicates itself to others; and many disciples in the new apostle are made whole by their faith. Crowds of strangers from all countries resort to Gräffenberg, where all diseases are treated except those of the chest. The patient is subjected to the pumping system, (ice-cold water being employed,) and then wrapped for five or six hours in flannel. No complaint, said the prince, could stand the perspiration which this treatment produces.

"No complaint, and no individual," I remarked.

"You are mistaken," replied the prince, with the zeal of a new convert; "among a multitude, there are very few who have died at Gräffenberg. Princes and princesses fix themselves near to the new saviour, and after having tried his remedy, the love of water becomes a passion."

Here prince D—— looked at his watch, and called a servant. The man came with a large pitcher of cold water in his hand, and poured it over his master's body between the waistcoat and the shirt. I could scarcely believe my eyes.

The prince continued the conversation without noticing my astonishment.

"The father of the reigning Duc de Nassau arrived at Gräffenberg entirely deprived of the use of his limbs; the water has greatly restored him; but as he aspires to a perfect cure, it is uncertain when he leaves. No one knows on arriving at

Gräffenberg how long he will remain; the duration of the treatment depends on the complaint and the temperament of the individual; besides one cannot calculate on the influence of a passion, and this mode of using water becomes a passion with some people, who continue, indefinitely, to linger near the source of their supreme felicity."

"Prince, in listening to your account, I am ready to believe in these wonderful results; but when I reflect, I must still doubt their efficacy. Such apparent cures have often ill consequences; perspirations so violent decompose the blood, and often change gout into dropsy."

"I am so persuaded of the efficacy of the cold water treatment," replied the prince, "that I am going to form near to me an establishment similar to that of Gräffenberg."

The Slavonians, thought I to myself, have a mania for other things besides cold water, namely, a general passion for novelties. The thoughts of this imitative people exercise themselves with the inventions of others.

Besides the personages already mentioned, there was yet another Russian princess on board our vessel. This lady, the princess L——, was a most agreeable person in society: our evenings passed delightfully in listening to Russian airs, which she sang with pleasing execution, and which were quite new to me. The princess D—— took parts with her, and even sometimes accompanied the airs with a few graceful steps of some Cossack dance. These national exhibitions and impromptu concerts agreeably suspended our conversations, and made the hours pass like moments.

True models of good taste and of sociable manners are only to be found in aristocratic lands. There, none think of giving themselves those *comme il faut* airs which spoil society in places infested by *parvenus*. In aristocratic circles, each member feels himself in his proper place, all are accustomed to the same society, and even where there is no sympathy, there is an intimacy that produces ease and confidence. The parties understand the slightest allusions that occur in conversation; each recognises his own manner of thinking in the language of the rest; all so dispose themselves towards each other as though expecting to pass through life in company; and travellers destined to remain together for a length of time understand each other better than those who meet for only an hour. From this necessary harmony springs general politeness, which is not, however, unvaried in its aspect. A delicate shading still marks the diversity of minds; and elegance of discourse embellishes all that is said, without doing injury to anything; for the truth of sentiments loses nothing by the sacrifices which delicacy of expression requires. Thus, thanks to the security which is established in all exclusive society, constraint disappears, and conversation throws off the coarseness without losing the charm of freedom.

Formerly, in France, every class of citizens could enjoy this advantage. There are many causes, into which I shall not here enter, that have deprived us of it; above all others is the improper mixing of the men of all classes.

These men congregate to gratify their vanity, instead of meeting for pleasure. Since society has

been thus thrown open, freedom has vanished from it altogether, and easy manners are no longer known in France. English stiffness and gravity have taken their place: these are indispensable weapons in a mixed society. But the English, in learning to make use of them, have at least sacrificed nothing, whereas we have lost all those embellishments which constituted the charm of life. A man who believes, or wishes to have it believed, that he belongs to good society because he has access to such or such a *salon* cannot be an agreeable companion. Real refinement is a thing good in itself; copied refinement is like all other affectation, evil.

Our new society is founded on ideas of democratic equality, and these ideas have brought ennui in the place of our former pleasures. It is not an extensive circle of acquaintance which renders society agreeable, it is to know well those whom you have chosen. Society is only a means, of which the end is intimacy.

Our Russian ladies have admitted into their little circle a French merchant, who is among the passengers. He is a man rather past the middle age, full of great schemes connected with steam-boats and railroads, but still exhibiting all his former youthful pretensions; agreeable smiles, gracious mien, winning grimaces, plebeian gestures, narrow ideas, and studied language. He is, notwithstanding, a good fellow, speaking willingly, and even well, when he speaks on subjects with which he is conversant, amusing also, though self-sufficient, and sometimes rather prosy.

He is going to Russia to *electrify* certain minds in favour of some great industrial undertakings. He

travels as agent for several French commercial houses who have associated, he says, to carry into effect these important objects; but his head, although full of grave commercial ideas, finds place, nevertheless, for all the songs and bon mots that have been popular in Paris for the last twenty years. Before turning merchant he had been a lancer, and he has preserved, in his air and attitudes, some amusing traces of his former profession. He never speaks to the Russians without alluding to French superiority in matters of every description; but his vanity is too palpable to become offensive, or to excite anything beyond a laugh.

When singing he casts tender glances upon the ladies; when declaiming the *Parisienne* and the *Marseillaise*, he folds his cloak around him with a theatrical air: his store of songs and sayings, although rather jovial in character, much amuses our fair strangers. In listening to him they seem to believe they are on a visit to Paris. The *mauvais ton* of this specimen of French manners by no means strikes them, because they do not comprehend its source or its scope; a language which they cannot understand cannot disgust them; besides, persons belonging to really good society are always the last to be annoyed or alarmed. The fear of being lowered in position does not oblige them to take offence at everything that is said.

The old Prince K—— and myself laugh between ourselves at the language to which they listen; they laugh on their part with the innocence of an ignorance unacquainted with the point where good taste ceases, and where French vulgarity begins.

Vulgarity commences so soon as the individual

thinks of avoiding it: such a thought never occurs to persons perfectly sure of their own good breeding.

When the gaiety of the ex-lancer becomes rather too exuberant, the Russian ladies moderate it by singing, in their turn, some of those national airs of which the melancholy and originality greatly charm me.

The Princess L—— has sung to us some airs of the Russian gypsies which, to my great surprise, bring the Spanish boleros to my mind. The Gitanos of Andalusia are of the same race as the Russian gypsies. This population dispersed, one knows not by what agency, throughout all Europe, has preserved in every region, its manners, its traditions and its national songs.

The sea voyage, so much dreaded in prospect, has proved so agreeable, that I look forward to its termination with real regret. Besides, who does not feel some sense of desolation in arriving in a large city, where one has no business and no friends. My passion for travel cools when I consider that it consists entirely of departures and arrivals. But what pleasures and advantages does not man purchase by this pain! Were it only that he can by this means obtain information without laborious study, it would be well thus to *turn over*, as the leaves of a book, the different countries of the earth.

When I feel myself discouraged in the midst of my pilgrimages, I say to myself, "If I wish for the result, I must take the means," and under this thought I persevere. I do more,—scarcely am I again in my own abode, than I think of recommencing my travels. Perpetual travel would be a delightful way of passing

life, especially for one who cannot conform to the ideas which govern the world in the age in which he lives. To change one's country is tantamount to changing one's century. It is a long by-gone age which I now hope to study in Russia.

Never do I recollect having met in travelling, with society so agreeable and amusing as in this passage. Our life here, is like life in the country in wet weather; we cannot get out, but each tasks himself to amuse the others, so that the effort of each turns to the benefit of the whole. This however must be ascribed to the perfect sociability of some of our passengers, and more especially to the amiable authority of Prince K——. Had it not been for the part he took at the commencement of our voyage, no one would have broken the ice, and we should have continued observing each other in silence during the whole passage. Instead of such a melancholy isolation, we talk and chatter night and day. The light, lasting during the whole twenty-four hours, has the effect of so deranging habits, that there are always some ready for conversation at any hour. It is now past three o'clock, and as I write, I hear my companions laughing and talking in the cabin; if I were to go down, they would ask me to recite some French verses, or to tell some story about Paris. They never tire of asking about Mademoiselle Rachel or Duprez, the two great dramatic stars of the day. They long to draw to their own country the celebrated talents which they cannot obtain permission to come and see among us.

When the French lancer, the mercantile militaire, joins in the conversation, it is generally to interrupt

it. There is then sure to be laughter, singing, and Russian dances.

This gaiety, innocent as it is, has proved offensive to two Americans going to Petersburg on business. These inhabitants of the New World do not permit themselves even a smile at the foolish pleasures of the young European women. They do not perceive that liberty and carelessness are the safeguards of youthful hearts. Their puritanism rebels not only against licence, but against mirth; they are Jansénists of the Protestant school; to please them, life must be made one protracted funeral. Happily, the ladies we have on board do not trouble themselves to render any reason to these pedantic merchants. Their manners are more simple than most of the women of the north, who, when they come to Paris, believe themselves obliged to distort their whole nature in order to seduce us. Our fair fellow-passengers please without seeming to think of pleasing; their French accent also appears to me better than that of most of the Polish women whom I have met in Saxony and Bohemia. In speaking our language they do not pretend to correct it, but endeavour to speak as we speak, and very nearly succeed.

Yesterday a slight accident which happened to our engine served to exhibit some of the secret traits of character in those on board.

The recollection of the former accident that befell to our boat has served to render the passengers rather timid and distrustful, though the weather has remained throughout extremely fine.

Yesterday after dinner, we were seated reading, when suddenly the motion of the paddles stopped,

and an unusual noise was heard to proceed from the engine. The sailors rushed forward; the captain followed, without saying a word in reply to the questions of the passengers. At length he gave the order to sound. "We are on a rock," said a female voice, the first that had dared to break our solemn silence. "The engine is going to burst," said another.

I was silent, though I began to think that my presentiments were going to be realised, and that it was not, after all, caprice which had inclined me to renounce this voyage.

The Princess L——, whose health is delicate, fell into a swoon, murmuring some broken words of grief that she should die so far from her husband. The Princess D—— pressed the arm of *hers*, and awaited the result with a calm, which one would not have expected from her slight frail form and gentle features.

The fat and amiable Prince K—— neither changed his countenance nor his place; he would have sunk in his arm-chair into the sea without disturbing himself. The French ex-lancer, half merchant, half comedian, put on a bold face, and began to hum a song. This bravado displeased me, and made me blush for France, where vanity searches out of all things to extract some opportunity for display; true moral dignity exaggerates nothing, not even indifference to danger; the Americans continued their reading; I observed every body.

At length the captain came to inform us that the nut of the screw of one of the pistons was broken, and that all would be made right again in a quarter of an hour.

At this news the fears that each party had more or less concealed betrayed themselves by a general explosion of rejoicing. Each confessed his thoughts and fears, all laughed at each other, and those who were the most candid in their confessions were the least laughed at. The evening that had commenced so ominously concluded with a dance and song.

Before separating for the night, Prince K—— complimented me for my good manners in listening with apparent pleasure to his stories. One may recognise the well-bred man, he observed, by the manner he assumes in listening to another. I replied that the best way by which to seem to be listening, was to listen. This answer, repeated by the prince, was lauded beyond its merit. Nothing is lost, and every thought is done more than justice to by persons whose benevolence even is intellectual.

The great charm of ancient French society lay in the art of making the best of others. If this amiable art is scarcely known among us in the present day, it is because it requires greater refinement of mind to praise than to depreciate. He who knows how to estimate all things, disdains nothing, and refuses to join in ridicule; but where envy reigns depreciation mixes with all that is said. Jealousy in the guise of wit, and under the mask of good sense, (for pretended good sense is always marked by a love of ridicule,) is the evil sentiment which in these days conspires against the pleasures of social life. In its endeavour to appear good and amiable, true politeness really becomes so; its possession seems to me to embrace that of all other virtues.

I shall here recount two stories, which will show how little meritorious was the attention for which I had been complimented.

We were passing the isle of Dago on the coast of Esthonia. The appearance of this spot is melancholy; it is a cold solitude, where nature appears naked and sterile, rather than savage and imposing; it seems as though she meant to repel man by the dulness, rather than by the terrors of her aspect."

"A strange scene has been witnessed in that isle," remarked Prince K——.

"At what period?"

"Not long ago, it was under the Emperor Paul."

"Pray relate it to us."

The prince then recounted, in a very interesting manner, the history of the Baron de Sternberg.

CHAP. VI.

TRAGEDY OF BARON DE STERNBERG. — TYPE OF LORD BYRON'S HEROES. — PARALLEL BETWEEN SIR W. SCOTT AND BYRON. — HISTORICAL ROMANCE. — MARRIAGE OF PETER THE GREAT. — ROMODANOWSKI. — INFLUENCE OF THE GREEK CHURCH IN RUSSIA. — TYRANNY SUPPORTED BY FALSEHOOD. — CORPSE IN THE CHURCH OF REVEL. — THE EMPEROR ALEXANDER DECEIVED. — RUSSIAN SENSITIVENESS TO THE OPINIONS OF FOREIGNERS. — A SPY.

It must be remembered that it is the Prince K—— who speaks.

"Baron Ungern de Sternberg had travelled over the greater part of Europe. He was a man of intelligence and observation, and his travels had made him all that he was capable of being made, namely, a great character developed by study and experience.

"On his return to St. Petersburgh, in the reign of the Emperor Paul, he fell into undeserved disgrace; and, under the bitter feeling which this produced, determined to quit the court. He shut himself up in the island of Dago, of which he was lord; and in the retirement of this wild domain swore a mortal hatred to all human kind, to revenge himself on the emperor, whom he viewed as the representative of the whole race.

"This individual, who was living when we were children, has served as a model for more than one of Lord Byron's heroes.

"In his seclusion he affected a sudden passion for study, and, in order to pursue freely his scientific

labours, he added to his mansion a very high tower, the walls of which you can see with the spy-glass."

Here the prince paused, and we took a view of the tower of Dago. The prince resumed:

"This tower he called his library, and crowned its summit with a sort of glazed lantern like an observatory, or rather light-house. He often repeated to his servants that he could only labour at night, and then no where but in this solitary place. It was there that he retired, as he said, to meditate, and to seek peace.

"No guests were admitted into this retreat except an only son, still a child, and his tutor.

"Towards midnight, when the baron believed them to be both asleep, he used often to shut himself up in his laboratory; the glass tower of which was then lighted with a lamp so brilliant, that, at a distance, it might be taken for a signal. This light-house, though not one in reality, was calculated to deceive strange vessels, that were in danger of being lost on the island, if their captains, venturing too far, did not perfectly know each point of the coast in the perilous Gulf of Finland.

"This error was precisely that which the terrible baron hoped for. Raised upon a rock, in the midst of a stormy sea, the perfidious tower became the beacon of inexperienced pilots; and the unfortunate beings, who were misled by the false hope that glittered before them, met their death at the moment they believed they had found a shelter from the storm.

"You may judge that nautical regulations were at that time very imperfectly maintained in Russia.

"As soon as a vessel was on the point of being wrecked, the baron proceeded to the shore, and secretly

embarked with numerous active and determined men, whom he kept for the purpose of aiding him in these nocturnal expeditions. He then gathered together the stranger mariners and, instead of affording them the expected succour, murdered them under cover of the dark; after which he pillaged their ship, although actuated throughout much less by a desire of gain than by a pure love of evil, and a disinterested pleasure in destruction.

" Doubting all things, and disbelieving the principle of justice, he considered moral and social disorder as being most analogous to the state of man here below, and civil and political virtues as chimeras that only oppose nature without subduing it.

" He pretended that, in putting an end to the life of his fellow creatures, he was subservient to the schemes of Providence, who was pleased, he said, to extract life out of death.

" One evening, towards the end of autumn, when the nights were very long, he had exterminated the crew of a Dutch merchantman, and the pirates, whom he kept under the title of guards, among the servants belonging to his house, were for several hours occupied in landing the cargo of the wrecked vessel, without observing that, during the massacre, the captain had profited by the darkness, and had saved himself in a boat which had followed him with some of the sailors of his vessel.

" Day-break surprised the baron and his emissaries at their work of darkness, and announced to them also the approach of a small boat. They immediately shut the gates of the secret vaults, where the produce

of their pillage was disposed; after which the drawbridge was let down before the stranger.

"The baron, with that elegant hospitality which is an indelible characteristic of Russian manners, hastened to receive the leader of the new comers.

"Affecting the most perfect security, he repaired to a saloon near the apartment of his son who was yet sleeping, and there awaited him. The tutor of his child was also in bed dangerously ill. The door of his chamber, which opened into the saloon, remained unclosed. The stranger was introduced.

"'Sir Baron,' said the man, with an air of bold assurance, 'you know me, though you may not recognise me, for you have seen me but once, and then in the dark. I am the captain of the vessel, a part of whose crew perished last night under your walls. It is with pain I announce to you that some of your people have been recognised in the fray that took place, and that you yourself were seen stabbing with your own hand one of my men.'

"The baron, without replying, arose and gently closed the door of the tutor's chamber. The stranger continued—'If I speak to you thus freely, it is not because I intend to ruin you, I only wish to prove to you that you are in my power. Restore to me my cargo and my ship; which, damaged as it is, will still convey me to St. Petersburgh, and I promise secrecy; which promise I am ready to confirm with my oath. If the desire of revenge had influenced me I should have landed on the opposite coast, and proclaimed you in the first village. The proposal I make, proves my willingness to save you in thus apprising you of the danger to which you are exposed by your crimes.'

"The baron all this time maintained a profound silence. The expression of his countenance was grave but not sinister. He requested a little time to reflect upon the course he should take, and withdrew, saying that in a quarter of an hour he would give his answer.

"Some minutes before the expiration of the stipulated time, he suddenly burst into the saloon through a secret door, threw himself upon the too adventurous stranger, and stabbed him to the heart.

"Orders had been meantime given to destroy the last man of the boat's crew. Silence, for a moment disturbed by so many murders, again reigned in this den of robbers. The tutor of the child had, however, overheard all that had passed: he continued to listen, but could at length only hear the step of the baron, and the deep snore of the Corsairs as, wrapped in their sheep-skins, they slept on the stairs of the tower.

"The baron, uneasy and suspicious, entered the chamber of this man; and examined his features with scrupulous attention. Standing near the bed, with the still bloody poniard in his hand, he watched a long time for the least signs which could betray a feigned slumber. At length, convinced that he was in a deep sleep, he resolved to let him live.

"Perfection in crime is as rare as in anything else," said the Prince K——, interrupting his narration.

We made no answer, for we were impatient to know the end of the history. He continued: —

"The suspicions of the tutor had been roused for some time past. As soon as the first words of the Dutch captain had met his ear he rose up, and wit-

85067

nessed through the chinks of the door, which the baron had locked upon him, all the circumstances of the murder. The instant afterwards he acted with the presence of mind before related, which deceived the assassin, and saved his life. After the baron had retired he rose, dressed, and, in spite of the fever that was upon him, let himself down from the window by cords, detached a skiff which he found fastened at the foot of the rampart, and pushed out to sea, steering towards the mainland, which he reached without accident, and where he immediately proclaimed the crime that he had witnessed.

"The absence of the sick man was soon noticed in the castle of Dago. The baron, blinded by the infatuation of crime, imagined at first that he had cast himself into the sea while under the delirium of fever. Entirely occupied in searching for his body, he thought not of flight, although the cord attached to the window and the disappearance of the skiff were irrefragable proofs of the real fact.

"Convinced, at length, by these evidences, he was beginning to prepare for escape, when he found his castle surrounded by troops which had been instantly despatched against him. For one moment he thought of defence, but his people all forsook him. He was taken and sentenced by the Emperor Paul to hard labour for life in Siberia.

"It was there he died, and such was the end of a man who once shone alike by the powers of his mind, and the elegance of his manners, in the most polished circles of Europe. Our mothers can yet recollect him as having been everything that was agreeable.

"I should not have related to you this romantic

tale if the circumstances of its occurrence, which would have been so appropriate to the middle-ages, had not belonged as it were to our own times. In everything, Russia is four centuries behind the world."

When Prince K—— had ceased speaking, we all exclaimed that the Baron de Sternberg was the type of Byron's Manfreds and Laras.

"It is unquestionable," said Prince K——, who had no fear of paradox, "that it is because Byron has drawn his models from real existences, that they appear to us to possess so few of the attributes of the probable. In poetry reality is never natural.

"That is so true," I replied, "that the fictions of Walter Scott produce a more perfect illusion than the exact copyings of Byron."

"Possibly, but you must look to yet other causes for this difference; Scott describes, Byron creates: the latter cares little for the reality, even in recounting it; the former is imbued with its instinct, even when inventing."

"Do not you think, prince," I replied, "that this instinct of reality, which you ascribe to the great romance-writer, is connected with his often being common-place? What masses of superfluous detail, and vulgar dialogue!—and, after all, it is in describing the dress and the apartments of his personages that he is most exact."

"Stay! I shall defend my favourite, Walter Scott," cried Prince K——, "I cannot permit so amusing a writer to be insulted."

"That he is amusing is just the species of merit which I deny him," I responded. "A romance writer

who needs a volume to prepare a scene is anything but amusing. Walter Scott was very fortunate in appearing at an epoch when people no longer knew what amusement meant."

"How he describes the human heart," said Prince D——: for every body was against me.

"Yes, provided he does not make it speak, for expression fails him whenever he attempts the passionate and the sublime: he draws characters by their actions admirably, for he has more skill and more power of observation than eloquence; his mind is methodical and calculating; he has appeared in a congenial age, and has marvellously revived and embodied the most vulgar and consequently the most popular ideas and images."

"He has been the first to solve, in a satisfactory manner, the difficult problem of historical romance: you cannot refuse him this merit," added Prince K——.

"Would that it were insolvable," I replied. "With what multitudes of false notions have the crowd of illiterate readers been imbued by the mixing of history with romance. This union is always mischievous, and, to me, scarcely appears amusing. I would prefer reading, even for amusement, M. Augustin Thierry, or any other equally grave author, to all the fables about real personages that have ever been invented."

"If it is a matter of taste," said Prince K——, smiling, "we will dispute no longer about it;" and, taking my arm, he begged me to assist him to his state-room, where, offering me a seat, he continued, in a low voice, "as we are alone, and you like history,

I will relate to you a story of a higher order than the one you have just heard: it is to you alone that I relate it, because before Russians one must not talk of history.

"You know that Peter the Great, after much hesitation, destroyed the patriarchate of Moscow, in order to unite on the same head the crown and the tiara. The political autocracy thus openly usurped that unlimited spiritual power which it had coveted for so long — monstrous union, unknown before among the nations of modern Europe. The chimera entertained by the popes during the middle-ages is now actually realised in a nation of sixty millions of people, many of them Asiatics, whom nothing surprises, and who are by no means sorry to find a grand Lama in their Czar.

"The Emperor Peter sought to unite himself in marriage with Catherine, the sutler.

"To accomplish this supreme object of his heart it was necessary to begin by finding a family name for the future empress. This was obtained I believe in Lithuania, where an obscure private gentleman was first converted into a great lord *by birth*, and afterwards discovered to be the brother of the empress elect.

"Russian despotism not only pays little respect to ideas and sentiments, it will also deny facts; it will struggle against evidence, and triumph in the struggle!!! for evidence, when it is inconvenient to power, has no more voice among us than has justice."

The bold language of the prince startled me. He had been educated at Rome, and, like all who possess any piety of feeling, and independence of mind, in

Russia, he inclined to the Catholic religion. While various reflections, suggested by his discourse, were passing in my mind, he continued his philosophical observations.

"The people, and even the great men, are resigned spectators of this war against truth; the lies of the despot, however palpable, are always flattering to the slave. The Russians, who bear so much, would bear no tyranny if the tyrant did not carefully act as though he believed them the dupes of his policy. Human dignity immersed and sinking in the gulf of absolute government, seizes hold of the smallest branch within reach, that may serve to keep it afloat. Human nature will bear much scorn and wrong; but it will not bear to be told in direct terms that it is scorned and wronged. When outraged by deeds, it takes refuge in words. Falsehood is so abasing, that to degrade the tyrant into the hypocrite is a vengeance which consoles the victim. Miserable and last illusion of misfortune, which must yet be respected, lest the serf should become still more vile, and the despot still more outrageous.

"There existed an ancient custom for two of the greatest noblemen of the empire to walk by the side of the patriarch of Moscow in solemn public processions.

"On the occasion of his marriage, the Czarinian pontiff determined to choose for acolytes in the bridal procession, on one side a famous boyard*, and on the other the new brother-in-law that he had created; for in Russia, sovereign power can do more than

* The title of a Russian noble.

create nobles, it can raise up relatives for those who are without any; with us, despotism is more powerful than nature; the emperor is not only the representative of God, he is himself the creative power; a power indeed greater than that of Deity, for it only extends its action to the future, whereas the emperor alters and amends the past: the law has no retroactive effect, the caprice of a despot has.

"The personage whom Peter wished to associate with the new brother of the empress was the highest noble in Moscow, and after the Czar, the greatest individual in the empire, his name was Prince Romodanowski. Peter notified him through his first minister that he was to attend the ceremony in order to walk by the emperor's side — an honour which he would share with the brother of the empress."

"'Very well,' replied the prince; 'but on which side of the Czar am I expected to place myself?'

"'My dear prince,' replied the courtier, 'how can you ask such a question? Of course the brother-in-law of his majesty will take the right.'

"'I shall not attend, then,' responded the haughty boyard.

"This answer reported to the Czar provoked a second message.

"'You shall attend!' was the mandate of the tyrant; 'you shall either attend, or I will hang you!'

"'Say to the Czar,' replied the indomitable Muscovite, 'that I entreat him first to execute the same sentence on my only son: this child is only fifteen years old; it is possible that, after having seen me perish, fear will make him consent to walk on the left hand of his sovereign; but I can depend on myself, both

before and after the execution of my child, never to do that which can disgrace the blood of Romodanowski.'"

"The Czar, I say it in his praise, yielded; but to revenge himself on the independent spirit of the Muscovite aristocracy, he built St. Petersburg.

"Nicholas," added prince K——, "would not have acted thus; he would have sent the boyard and his son to the mines, and have declared by an ukase, *conceived in legal terms*, that neither the father nor the son could have children; perhaps he would have decreed that the father had never been married; such things still often take place in Russia, the best proof of which is that we are forbidden to recount them."

Be this as it may, the pride of the Muscovite noble gives a perfect idea of that singular combination of which the actual state of Russian society is the result. A monstrous compound of the petty refinements of Byzantium, and the ferocity of the desert horde, a struggle between the etiquette of the Lower Empire, and the savage virtues of Asia, have produced the mighty state which Europe now beholds, and the influence of which she will probably feel hereafter, without being able to understand its operation.

We have just seen an instance of arbitrary power outbraved and humiliated by the aristocracy.

This fact, and many others, justify me in maintaining that it is an aristocracy which constitutes the greatest check on the despotism of an individual,—on an autocracy; the soul of aristocracy is pride, the spirit of democracy is envy. We will now see how easily an autocrat may be deceived.

This morning we passed Revel. The sight of that place, which has not long been Russian territory,

recalled to our memories the proud name of Charles XII., and the battle of Narva. In this battle was killed a Frenchman, the Prince de Croï, who fought under the king of Sweden. His body was carried to Revel, where he could not be buried, because during the campaign he had contracted debts in the province, and had left nothing to pay them. According to an ancient custom of the land, his body was placed in the church of Revel until his heirs should satisfy his creditors. This corpse is still in the same church where it was laid more than one hundred years ago. The amount of the original debt has become so greatly augmented by interest, and by the daily charge made for the keeping of the corpse, that there are few fortunes which would now suffice to acquit it.

In passing through Revel about twenty years since the Emperor Alexander visited the church, and was so shocked with the hideous spectacle presented by the corpse, that he commanded its immediate interment. On the morrow the Emperor departed, and the body of the Prince de Croï was duly carried to the cemetry. The day after it was brought back to the church, and placed in its former position. If there is not justice in Russia, there are, it would appear, customs more powerful even than the sovereign will.

What most amused me during this too short passage was to find myself constantly obliged, in obedience to my instinctive notions of equity, to justify Russia against Prince K——'s observations. This won me the good will of all the Russians who heard our conversation. The sincerity of the opinions which

the amiable Prince pronounces on his country, at least proves to me that in Russia there are some who may speak their mind.

When I remarked this to him, he replied, that he was not a Russian!! Singular assertion! However, Russian or stranger, he says what he thinks. He has filled the most important political posts, spent two fortunes, worn out the favour of several sovereigns, and is now old, and infirm, but especially protected by a member of the imperial family, who loves wit too well to fear it. Besides, in order to escape Siberia, he pretends that he is writing memoirs, and that he has deposited the finished volumes in France. The Emperor dreads publicity as much as Russsia dreads the Emperor.

I am much struck by the extreme susceptibility of the Russians as regards the judgment which strangers may form respecting them. The impression which their country may make on the minds of travellers occupies their thoughts incessantly. What would be said of the Germans, the English, and the French if they indulged themselves in such puerility? If the satires of Prince K—— are disagreeable to his countrymen, it is not so much because their own sentiments are wounded, as on account of the influence these satires may have upon me, who am become an important person in their eyes since they have heard that I write my travels.

"Do not allow yourself to be prejudiced against Russia by this unpatriotic Russian; do not write under the influence of his statements; it is from a wish to display his French wit at our expense that he thus speaks, but in reality he has no such opinion."

This is the kind of language that is addressed to me, privately, ten times a day. It appears to me as though the Russians would be content to become even yet worse and more barbarous than they are, provided they were thought better and more civilised. I do not admire minds which hold the truth thus cheaply; civilisation is not a fashion, nor an artificial device, it is a power which has its result, — a root which sends forth its stalk, produces its flowers, and bears its fruit.

"At least you will not call us the barbarians of the north, as your countrymen do." This is said to me every time I appear amused by some interesting recital, some national melody, or some noble or poetic sentiment ascribed to a Russian. I reply to these fears by some unimportant compliment, but I think in my own mind that I could better love the barbarians of the north than the apes who are ever imitating the south.

There are remedies for primitive barbarism, there are none for the mania of appearing what one is not.

A kind of Russian *savant*, a grammarian, a translator of various German works, and a professor of I know not which college, has made as many advances towards me as he could during this passage. He has been travelling through Europe, and returns to Russia full of zeal, he says, to propagate there all that is valuable in the modern opinions of western Europe. The freedom of his discourse appeared to me suspicious: it was not that luxury of independence observable in Prince K——; it was a studied liberalism, calculated to draw out the views of others.

If I am not mistaken, there may be always found some *savant* of this kind, on the ordinary lines of route to Russia, in the hotels of Lubeck, the steamboats, and even at Havre, which, thanks to the navigation of the German and Baltic seas, has become the Muscovite frontier.

This man extracted from me very little. He was specially desirous of learning whether I should write my travels, and obligingly offered me the lights of his experience. He left me at last thoroughly persuaded that I travelled only to divert myself, and without any intention of publishing the relation of a tour which would be performed very rapidly. This appeared to satisfy him; but his inquietude which was thus allayed, awoke my own. If I write this journey I must expect to give umbrage to a government more artful and better served with spies than any other in the world. This is an unpleasant idea. I must conceal my letters, I must be guarded in my language; but I will affect nothing: the most consummate deception is that which assumes no mask.

CHAP. VII.

THE RUSSIAN MARINE. — REMARK OF LORD DURHAM'S. — GREAT EFFORTS FOR SMALL RESULTS. — THE AMUSEMENTS OF DESPOTISM. — KRONSTADT. — RUSSIAN CUSTOM-HOUSE. — GLOOMY ASPECT OF NATURE. — RECOLLECTIONS OF ROME. — ENGLISH POETICAL NAME FOR SHIPS OF WAR. — OBJECT OF PETER THE GREAT. — THE FINNS. — BATTERIES OF KRONSTADT. — ABJECT CHARACTER OF THE LOWER CLASSES OF RUSSIAN EMPLOYÉS. — INQUISITIONS OF THE POLICE, AND THE CUSTOM-HOUSE. — SUDDEN CHANGE IN THE MANNERS OF FELLOW-TRAVELLERS, — FICKLENESS OF NORTHERN PEOPLE.

As we approached Kronstadt, — a sub-marine fortress of which the Russians are justly proud, — the Gulf of Finland suddenly assumed an animated appearance. The imperial fleet was in motion and surrounded us on all sides. It remains in port, ice-locked during more than six months of the year; but during the three months of summer the marine cadets are exercised in nautical manœuvres, between St. Petersburg and the Baltic. After passing the fleet we again sailed on an almost desert sea; now and then, only, enlivened by the distant apparition of some merchant vessel, or the yet more infrequent smoke of a *pyroscaph*, as steam-boats are learnedly called in the nautical language of some parts of Europe.

The Baltic sea, by the dull hues of its unfrequented waters, proclaims the vicinity of a continent depopulated under the rigours of the climate. The barren

shores harmonise with the cold aspect of the sky and water, and chill the heart of the traveller.

No sooner does he arrive on this unattractive coast than he longs to leave it; he calls to mind, with a sigh, the remark of one of Catherine's favourites, who, when the Empress complained of the effects of the climate of Petersburg upon her health, observed, "It is not God who should be blamed, Madame, because men have persisted in building the capital of a great empire in a territory destined by nature to be the patrimony of wolves and bears."

My travelling companions have been explaining to me, with much self-satisfaction, the recent progress of the Russian marine. I admire this prodigy without magnifying it as they do. It is a creation, or rather a re-creation of the present emperor's. This prince amuses himself by endeavouring to realise the favourite object of Peter I., but however powerful a man may be, he is forced sooner or later to acknowledge that nature is more powerful still. So long as Russia shall keep within her natural limits, the Russian navy will continue the hobby of the emperors and nothing more!

During the season of naval exercises, I am informed that the younger pupils remain performing their evolutions in the neighbourhood of Kronstadt, while the more advanced extend their voyages of discovery as far as Riga, and sometimes even to Copenhagen.

As soon as I found that the sole object of all this display of naval power which passed before my eyes, was the instruction of pupils, a secret feeling of ennui extinguished my curiosity.

All this unnecessary preparation which is neither the result of commerce nor of war, appears to me a mere parade. Now, God knows, and the Russians know, whether there is any pleasure in a parade! The taste for reviews in Russia is carried beyond all bounds, and here, before even landing in this empire of military evolutions, I must be present at a review on the water. But I must not laugh at this. Puerility on a grand scale appears to me a monstrous thing, impossible except under a tyranny, of which it is, perhaps, the most terrible result! Everywhere, except under an absolute despotism, men, when they make great efforts, have in view great ends; it is only among a blindly abject people that the monarch may command immense sacrifices for the sake of trifling results.

The view of the naval power of Russia, gathered together for the amusement of the Czar, at the gate of his capital, has thus caused me only a painful impression. The vessels which will be inevitably lost in a few winters, without having rendered any service, suggest to my mind images — not of the power of a great country, but of the useless toils to which the poor unfortunate seamen are condemned. The ice is a more terrible enemy to this navy than foreign war. Every autumn after the three months' exercise, the pupil returns to his prison, the plaything to its box, and the frost begins to wage its more serious war upon the imperial finances. Lord Durham once remarked to the Emperor himself, with a freedom of speech which wounded him in the most sensitive part, that the Russian ships of war were but the playthings of the Russian sovereign.

As regards myself, this childish Colossus by no means predisposes me to admire what I may expect to see in the interior of the empire. To admire Russia in approaching it by water, it is necessary to forget the approach to England by the Thames. The first is the image of death; the last, of life.

On dropping anchor before Kronstadt, we learned that one of the noble vessels we had seen manœuvering around us had just been lost on a sand bank. This shipwreck was dangerous only to the captain, who expected to be cashiered, and, perhaps, punished yet more severely. Prince K—— said to me privately, that he would have done better to have perished with his vessel. Our fellow-traveller the Princess L—— had a son attached to the unlucky ship. She was placed in a situation of painful suspense, until news of his safety was brought to her by the governor of Kronstadt.

The Russians are incessantly repeating to me that it is requisite to spend at least two years in their country before passing a judgment upon it; so difficult is it to understand.

But though patience and prudence may be necessary virtues in those learned travellers who aspire to the glory of producing erudite works, I, who have been hitherto writing only for my friend and myself, have no intention of making my journal a work of labour. I have some fear of the Russian custom-house, but they assure me that my *écritoire* will be respected.

Nothing can be more melancholy than the aspect of nature in the approach to St. Petersburg. As one advances up the Gulf, the flat marshes of Ingria

terminate in a little wavering line drawn between the sky and the sea; this line is Russia. It presents the appearance of a wet lowland, with here and there a few birch trees thinly scattered. The landscape is void of objects, and colours; has no bounds, and yet no sublimity. It has just light enough to be visible; the grey mossy earth well accords with the pale sun which illumines it, not from overhead, but from near the horizon, or almost indeed from below,—so acute is the angle which the oblique rays form with the surface of this unfavoured soil. In Russia the finest days have a blueish dimness. If the nights are marked by a clearness which surprises, the days are clothed with an obscurity which saddens.

Kronstadt, with its forest of masts, its substructures, and its ramparts of granite, finely breaks the monotonous reverie of the pilgrim, who is, like me, seeking for imagery in this dreary land. I have never seen, in the approaches to any other great city, a landscape so melancholy as the banks of the Neva. The *campagna* of Rome is a desert, but what picturesque objects, what past associations, what light, what fire, what poetry, if I might be allowed the expression, I would say, what passion animates this religious land. To reach St. Petersburg, you must pass a desert of water framed in a desert of peat earth; sea, shore, and sky, are all blended into one mirror, but so dull, so tarnished, that it reflects nothing.

The thought of the noble vessels of the Russian navy, destined to perish without having ever been in action, pursues me like a dream.

The English, in their idiom, which is so poetical when it relates to maritime subjects, call a vessel of

the royal navy, *a man of war.* Never will the Russians be thus able to denominate their ships of parade. These *men of court,* or wooden courtiers, are nothing more than the hospital of the imperial service. If the sight of so useless a marine inspired me with any fear, it was not the fear of war but of tyranny. It recalled to mind the inhumanities of Peter I., that type of all Russian monarchs, ancient and modern.

Some miserable boats, manned by fishermen as dirty as Esquimaux, a few vessels employed in towing timber for the construction of the *imperial navy,* and a few steam-boats, mostly of foreign build, were the only objects that enlivened the scene. Such is the approach to St. Petersburgh: all that could have influenced against the choice of this site, so contrary to the views of nature or to the real wants of a great people, must have passed before the mind of Peter the Great without striking him. The sea, at any cost; — such was his sentiment. Whimsical idea in a Russian to found the capital of the empire of the Slavonians among the Finns, and in the vicinity of the Swedes! Peter the Great might say that his only object was to give a port to Russia; but if he had the genius which is ascribed to him, he ought to have foreseen the scope of his work; and in my opinion he did foresee it. Policy, and, I fear, the revenge of imperial self-love, wounded by the independence of the old Muscovites, have created the destinies of modern Russia.

Russia is like a vigorous person suffocating for want of external air. Peter I. promised it an outlet, but without perceiving that a sea necessarily closed

during eight months in the year, is not like other seas. Names, however, are everything in Russia. The efforts of Peter, his subjects, and successors, extraordinary as they are, have only served to create a city which it is difficult to inhabit; with which the Neva disputes the soil whenever the wind blows from the Gulf, and from which the people think of flying altogether, at each step that this war of elements compels them to take towards the south. For a bivouac, quays of granite are superfluous.

The Finns, among whom the Russians fixed their new capital, are of Scythian origin, they are still almost Pagans — suitable inhabitants of the soil of Petersburg. It was only in 1836 that an ukase appeared, commanding their priests to add a family name to the saint's name given to the children in baptism.

This race is almost without physiognomy. The middle of the face is flattened to a degree that renders it deformed. The men, though ugly and dirty, are said to be strong, which, however, does not prevent their being poor. Although the natives, they are seldom seen in Petersburg except upon market days. They inhabit the swamps, and slightly elevated granite hills of the environs.

Kronstadt is a very flat island in the middle of the Gulf of Finland: this aquatic fortress is raised above the sea only just sufficiently to defend the navigation to St. Petersburg. Its foundations and many of its works are under water. Its guns are disposed, according to the Russians, with great skill, and by virtue of the shower of ball that an order of the emperor could here pour upon an enemy, the place passes for

impregnable. I am not aware whether these guns command both the passages of the Gulf; the Russians who could have informed me, would not. My experience, although of recent date, has already taught me to distrust the rodomontades and exaggerations in which the subjects of the Czar, inspired by an excess of zeal in the service of their master, indulge. National pride appears to me to be tolerable only among a free people.

We arrived at Kronstadt about the dawning of one of those days without real beginning or end, which I am tired of describing though not of admiring.

After casting anchor before the silent fortress, we had to wait a long time for the arrival of a host of official personages, who boarded us one after the other; commissaries of police, directors and subdirectors of the customs, and finally the Comptroller himself. This important personage considered himself obliged to pay us a visit on account of the illustrious Russian passengers on board. He conversed for a long time with the returned princes and princesses. They talked in Russian, probably because the politics of the West were the subject of their discourse; but when the conversation fell on the troubles of landing and the necessity of leaving our carriages at Kronstadt, French was freely spoken.

The Travemünde packet draws too much water to ascend the Neva, the passengers, therefore, have to proceed by a smaller steamer, which is dirty and ill-constructed. We are allowed to carry with us our lighter baggage, after it has been examined by the officers. When this formality is concluded we leave for Petersburg, with the hope that our carriages left

in the charge of these people, may arrive safely on the morrow.

The Russian princes were obliged, like myself, to submit to the laws of the custom-house, but on arriving at Petersburg I had the mortification of seeing them released in three minutes, whilst I had to struggle with every species of trickery for the space of three hours.

A multitude of little superfluous precautions engender here a population of deputies and sub-officials, each of whom acquits himself with an air of importance and a rigorous precision, which seemed to say, though everything is done with much silence, "Make way, I am one of the members of the grand machine of state."

Such members, acting under an influence which is not in themselves, in a manner resembling the wheel-work of a clock, are called men in Russia! The sight of these voluntary automata inspires me with a kind of fear: there is something supernatural in an individual reduced to the state of a mere machine. If, in lands where the mechanical arts flourish, wood and metal seem endowed with human powers, under despotisms, human beings seem to become as instruments of wood. We ask ourselves, what can become of their superfluity of thought? and we feel ill at ease at the thought of the influence that must have been exerted on intelligent creatures before they could have been reduced to mere *things*. In Russia I pity the human beings, as in England I feared the machines: in the latter country, the creations of man lack nothing but the gift of speech; here, the gift of speech is a thing unnecessary to the creatures of the state.

These machines, clogged with the inconvenience of a soul, are, however, marvellously polite; it is easy to see they have been trained to civility, as to the management of arms, from their cradle. But of what value are the forms of urbanity when their origin savours of compulsion? The free-will of man is the consecration that can alone impart a worth or a meaning to human actions; the power of choosing a master can alone give a value to fidelity; and since, in Russia, an inferior chooses nothing, all that he says and does is worthless and unmeaning.

The numerous questions I had to meet, and the precautionary forms that it was necessary to pass through, warned me that I was entering the Empire of Fear, and depressed my spirits.

I was obliged to appear before an Areopagus of deputies who had assembled to interrogate the passengers. The members of this formidable rather than imposing tribunal were seated before a large table; some of them were turning over the leaves of the register with an attention which had a sinister appearance, for their ostensible employ was not sufficient to account for so much gravity.

Some, with pen in hand, listened to the replies of the passengers, or rather the accused, for every stranger is treated as culpable on arriving at the Russian frontier. All the answers were carefully written down, and the passports minutely examined, and detained, under the promise that they would be returned at Petersburg.

These formalities being satisfied, we proceeded on board the new steam-boat. Hour after hour elapsed, and still there was no talk of starting. Every mo-

ment fresh boats proceeded from the city, and rowed towards us. Although we were moored close to the walls, the silence was profound. No voice issued from this tomb. The shadows that were gliding in their boats around were equally silent. They were clad in coarse capotes of grey wool, their faces lacked expression, their eyes possessed no fire, their complexion was of a green or yellow hue; I was told that they were sailors attached to the garrison, but they more resembled soldiers. Sometimes the boats passed round us in silence, sometimes six or a dozen ragged boatmen, half covered with sheep-skins, the wool turned within, and the filthy skin appearing without, brought us some new police agent, or tardy custom-house officer. These arrivals and departures, though they did not accelerate our matters, at least gave me leisure to reflect on the species of filthiness peculiar to the people of the North. Those of the South pass their life in the open air half naked, or in the water; those of the North, for the most part shut up within doors, have a greasy dirtiness, which appears to me far more offensive than the neglect of a people destined to live beneath the open heaven, and born to bask in the sun.

The tedium to which these Russian formalities condemned us, gave me also an opportunity of remarking that the great lords of the country were little inclined to bear patiently the inconveniences of public regulations, when those regulations proved inconvenient to themselves.

"Russia is the land of useless formalities," they murmured among themselves — but in French, that they might not be overheard by the subaltern *em-*

ployés. I have retained the remark, with the justice of which my own experience has only too deeply impressed me. As far as I have been hitherto able to observe, a work that should be entitled *The Russians judged by Themselves,* would be severe. The love of their country is with them only a mode of flattering its master; as soon as they think that master can no longer hear, they speak of every thing with a frankness which is the more startling because those who listen to it become responsible.

The cause of all our delay was at length revealed. The chief of chiefs, the director of the directors of the custom-house again presented himself: it was this visit we had been awaiting so long, without knowing it. At first it appeared as if the only business of the great functionary was to play the part of the man of fashion among the Russian ladies. He reminded the Princess D—— of their rencontre in a house where the Princess had never been; he spoke to her of court balls she had never seen: but while continuing to dispense these courtly airs, our drawing-room officer of the customs would now and then gracefully confiscate a parasol, stop a portmanteau, or recommence, with an imperturbable *sang froid,* the researches already conscientiously made by his subordinates.

In Russian administration, minuteness does not exclude disorder. Much trouble is taken to attain unimportant ends, and those employed believe they can never do enough to show their zeal. The result of this emulation among clerks and commissioners is, that the having passed through one formality does not secure the stranger from another. It is like a pil-

lage, in which, after the unfortunate wight has escaped from the first troop, he may yet fall into the hands of a second and a third.

The chief turnkey of the empire proceeded slowly to examine the vessel. At length this perfumed Cerberus, for he scented of musk at the distance of a league, released us from the ceremonies attending an *entrée* into Russia, and we were soon under weigh, to the great joy of the princes and princesses, who were going to rejoin their families. Their pleasure belied the observation of my host in Lübeck; as for me, I could not partake in it: on the contrary, I regretted quitting their delightful society to go and lose myself in a city whose vicinity was so uninviting. But the charm of that society was already broken; as we drew towards the end of our journey the ties which had united us became severed—fragile ties, formed only by the passing requirements of the voyage.

The women of the North know wonderfully well how to make us believe that they would have desired to meet with that which destiny has brought in their way. This is not falsehood, it is refined coquetry, a species of complaisance towards fate, and a supreme grace. Grace is always natural, though that does not prevent its being often used to hide a lie. The rude shocks and uncomfortably constraining influences of life disappear among graceful women and poetical men; they are the most deceptive beings in creation; distrust and doubt cannot stand before them; they create what they imagine; if they do not lie to others, they do to their own hearts; for illusion is their element, fiction their vocation, and

pleasures in appearance their happiness. Beware of grace in woman, and poetry in man — weapons the more dangerous because the least dreaded!

Such were my thoughts on leaving the walls of Kronstadt: we were still all together, but we were no longer united. That circle, animated, but the previous evening, by a secret harmony which rarely exists in society, now lacked its vital principle. Few things had ever appeared to me more melancholy than this sudden change. I acknowledged it as the condition attached to the pleasures of the world, I had foreseen it, I had submitted a hundred times to the same experience; but never before did it enlighten me in so abrupt a manner. Besides, what annoyances are more painful than those of which we cannot complain? I saw each individual about to re-enter his own path; the free interchange of feeling which unites those travelling together to the same goal no longer existed among them; they were returning into real life, whilst I was left alone to wander from place to place. To be ever wandering is scarcely to live. I felt myself abandoned, and I compared the cheerlessness of my isolation to their domestic pleasures. Isolation may be voluntary, but is it on this account any the more sweet? At the moment, everything appeared to me preferable to my independence, and I regretted even the cares of domestic life. I could read in the eyes of the women the thoughts of husband, children, milliners, hairdressers, the ball, and the court; and I could equally read there, that, notwithstanding the protestations of yesterday, I was no longer an object of concern to them. The people of the North have changeable

hearts; their affections, like the faint rays of their sun, are always dying. Remaining fixedly attached neither to persons nor to things — willingly quitting the land of their birth — born for invasions — these people appear as though merely destined to sweep down from the pole, at the times and epochs appointed by God, in order to temper and refresh the races of the South, scorched by the fires of heaven and of their passions.

On arriving at Petersburg, *my friends*, favoured by their rank, were speedily liberated from their floating prison, in which they left me bound by the irons of the police and the custom-house, without so much as bidding me adieu. Where would have been the use of adieus? I was as dead to them. What are travellers to mothers of families? Not one cordial word, not one look, not one thought was bestowed on me. It was the white curtain of the magic lantern, after the shadows have passed. I repeat that I had expected this *dénouement*, but I had not expected the pain which it caused me; so true it is that within ourselves exists the source of all our unforeseen emotions.

Only three days before landing, two of our fair and amiable travellers had made me promise to visit them in Petersburg, where the court is now assembled.

CHAP. VIII.

APPROACH TO PETERSBURG BY THE NEVA. — INCONGRUITY BETWEEN THE CLIMATE AND ASPECT OF THE COUNTRY AND THE STYLE OF ARCHITECTURE. — ABSURD IMITATION OF THE MONUMENTS OF GREECE. — THE CUSTOM-HOUSE AND POLICE. — INQUISITORIAL EXAMINATION. — DIFFICULTIES OF LANDING. — APPEARANCE OF THE STREETS. — STATUE OF PETER THE GREAT. — THE WINTER PALACE — REBUILT IN ONE YEAR — THE MEANS EMPLOYED. — RUSSIAN DESPOTISM. — CITATION FROM HERBERSTEIN. — KARAMSIN. — THE CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE ACCORDS WITH THAT OF THE GOVERNMENT.

THE streets of Petersburg present a strange appearance to the eyes of a Frenchman. I will endeavour to describe them; but I must first notice the approach to the city by the Neva. It is much celebrated, and the Russians are justly proud of it, though I did not find it equal to its reputation. When, at a considerable distance, the steeples begin to appear, the effect produced is more singular than imposing. The hazy outline of land, which may be perceived far off between the sky and the sea, becomes, as you advance, a little more unequal at some points than at others: these scarcely perceptible irregularities are found on nearer approach to be the gigantic architectural monuments of the new capital of Russia. We first begin to recognise the Greek steeples and the gilded cupolas of convents; then some modern public buildings — the front of the Exchange, and the white colonnades of the colleges, museums, barracks, and palaces which border the quays of granite, become discernible. On

entering the city, you pass some sphinxes, also of granite. Their dimensions are colossal and their appearance imposing; nevertheless these copies of the antique have no merit as works of art. A city of palaces is always magnificent, but the imitation of classic monuments shocks the taste when the climate under which these models are so inappropriately placed is considered. Soon, however, the stranger is struck with the form and multitude of turrets and metallic spires which rise in every direction: this at least is national architecture. Petersburg is flanked with numbers of large convents, surmounted by steeples; pious edifices, which serve as a rampart to the profane city. The Russian churches have preserved their primitive appearance; but it is not the Russians who invented that clumsy and capricious Byzantine style, by which they are distinguished. The Greek religion of this people, their character, education, and history, alike justify their borrowing from the Lower Empire; they may be permitted to seek for models at Constantinople, but not at Athens. Viewed from the Neva, the parapets of the quays of Petersburg are striking and magnificent; but the first step after landing discovers them to be badly and unevenly paved with flints, which are as disagreeable to the eye as inconvenient to the feet and ruinous to the wheels. The prevailing taste here is the brilliant and the striking: spires, gilded and tapering like electric conductors; porticoes, the bases of which almost disappear under the water; squares, ornamented with columns which seem lost in the immense space that surrounds them; antique statues, the character and attire of which so ill accord with the

aspect of the country, the tint of the sky, the costume and manners of the inhabitants, as to suggest the idea of being captive heroes in a hostile land; expatriated edifices, temples that might have fallen from the summit of the Grecian mountains into the marshes of Lapland; — such were the objects that most struck me at the first sight of St. Petersburg. The magnificent temples of the pagan Gods, which so admirably crown, with their horizontal lines and severely chaste contours, the promontories of the Ionian shores, and whose marbles, gilded by the sunshine amid the rocks of the Peloponnesus, here become mere heaps of plaster and mortar; the incomparable ornaments of Grecian sculpture, the wonderful minutiæ of classic art, have all given place to an indescribably burlesque style of modern decoration, which substitution passes among the Finlanders as proof of a pure taste in the arts. Partially to imitate that which is perfect is to spoil it. We should either strictly copy the model, or invent altogether. But the re-production of the monuments of Athens, however faithfully executed, would be lost in a miry plain, continually in danger of being overflowed by water whose level is nearly that of the land. Here nature suggests to man the very opposite of that which he has imagined. Instead of imitations of pagan temples, it demands bold projecting forms and perpendicular lines, in order to pierce the mists of a polar sky, and to break the monotonous surface of the moist grey steppes which form, farther than the eye or the imagination can stretch, the territory of Petersburg. I begin to understand why the Russians urge us with so much earnestness to

visit them during winter: six feet of snow conceals all this dreariness, but in summer we see the country. Explore the territory of Petersburg and the neighbouring provinces, and you will find, I am told, for hundreds of leagues, nothing but ponds and morasses, stunted firs and dark-leaved birch. To this sombre vegetation the white shroud of winter is assuredly preferable. Every where the same plains and bushes seem to compose the same landscape; at least, until the traveller approaches Finland and Sweden. There he finds a succession of little granite rocks covered with pines, which change the appearance of the soil, though without giving much variety to the landscape. It will be easily believed that the gloom of such a country is scarcely lessened by the lines of columns which men have raised on its even and naked surface. The proper bases of Greek peristyles are mountains: there is here no harmony between the inventions of man and the gifts of nature; in short, a taste for edifices without taste has presided over the building of St. Petersburg.

But, however shocked our perceptions of the beautiful may be by the foolish imitations which spoil its appearance, it is impossible to contemplate without a species of admiration, an immense city which has sprung from the sea at the bidding of one man, and which has to defend itself against a periodical inundation of ice, and a perpetual one of water.

The Kronstadt steam-boat dropped her anchor before the English quay opposite the Custom-house, and not far from the famous square where the statue of Peter the Great stands mounted on its rock.

I would gladly spare my reader the detail of the

new persecutions, which, under the name of *simple* formalities, I had to undergo at the hand of the police, and its faithful ally the custom-house; but it is a duty to give a just idea of the difficulties which attend the stranger on the maritime frontier of Russia: the entrance by land is, I am told, more easy.

For three days in the year the sun of Petersburg is insupportable. I arrived on one of these days. Our persecutors commenced by impounding us (not the Russians, but myself and the other foreigners) on the deck of our vessel. We were there, for a long time, exposed without any shelter to the powerful heat of the morning sun. It was eight o'clock, and had been daylight ever since one hour after midnight. They spoke of thirty degrees of Réaumur *, which temperature, be it remembered, is much more inconvenient in the North, where the air is surcharged with vapour, than in hot climates.

At length I was summoned to appear before a new tribunal, assembled, like that of Kronstadt, in the cabin of our vessel. The same questions were addressed to me, with the same politeness, and my answers were recorded with the same formalities.

"What is your object in Russia?"

"To see the country."

"That is not here a motive for travelling."

(What humility in this objection!)

"I have no other."

"Whom do you expect to see in Petersburg?"

"Every one with whom I may have an opportunity of making acquaintance."

* Nearly 100° Fahrenheit. — *Trans.*

"How long do you think of remaining in Russia?"

"I do not know."

"But, about how long?"

"A few months."

"Have you a public diplomatic mission?

"No."

"A secret one?"

"No."

"Any scientific object?"

"No."

"Are you employed by your government to examine the social and political state of this country?"

"No."

"By any commercial association?"

"No."

"You travel, then, from mere curiosity?"

"Yes."

"What was it that induced you, under this motive, to select Russia?"

"I do not know," &c. &c. &c.

"Have you letters of introduction to any people of this country?"

I had been forewarned of the inconvenience of replying too frankly to this question; I therefore spoke only of my banker.

At the termination of the session of this court of assize I encountered several of my *accomplices.* These strangers had been sadly perplexed, owing to some irregularities that had been discovered in their passports. The blood-hounds of the Russian police are quick-scented, and have a very different manner of treating different individuals. An Italian mer-

chant, who was among our passengers, was searched unmercifully, not omitting even the clothes on his person, and his pocket-book. Had such a search been made upon me, I should have been pronounced a very suspicious character. My pockets were full of letters of introduction, and though the greater number had been given me by the Russian ambassador himself, and by others equally well known, they were sealed; a circumstance which made me afraid of leaving them in my writing-case. The police permitted me to pass without searching my person; but when my baggage came to be unpacked before the custom-house officers, these new enemies instituted a most minute examination of my effects, more especially my books. These were seized *en masse*, and without any attention to my protestations, but an extraordinary politeness of manner was all the while maintained. A pair of pistols and an old portable clock were also taken from me, without my being able to ascertain the reason of the confiscation. All that I could get was the promise that they would be returned.

I have now been more than twenty-four hours on shore without having been able to recover any thing, and to crown my embarrassment, my carriage has, by mistake, been forwarded from Kronstadt to the address of a Russian prince. It will require trouble, and explanations without end, to prove this error to the custom-house agents; for the prince of my carriage is from home.

Between nine and ten o'clock I found myself, personally, released from the fangs of the custom-house, and entered Petersburg under the kind care of a German traveller, whom I met *by chance* on the quay.

If a spy, he was at least a useful one, speaking both French and Russian, and undertaking to procure me a drowsky; while, in the mean time, he himself aided my valet to transport in a cart to Coulon's hotel such part of my baggage as had been given up.

Coulon is a Frenchman, who is said to keep the best hotel in Petersburg, which is not saying much. In Russia, foreigners soon lose all trace of their national character, without, at the same time, ever assimilating with that of the natives.

The obliging stranger found even a guide for me who could speak German, and who mounted behind in the drowsky, in order to answer my questions. This man acquainted me with the names of the buildings we passed in proceeding to the hotel, which occupied some time, for the distances are great in Petersburg.

The too celebrated statue of Peter the Great, placed on its rock by the Empress Catherine, first attracted my attention. The equestrian figure is neither antique nor modern; it is a Roman of the time of Louis XV. To aid in supporting the horse, an enormous serpent has been placed at his feet; which is an ill-conceived idea, serving only to betray the impotence of the artist.

I stopped for one moment before the scaffolding of an edifice which, though not yet completed, is already famous in Europe, the church, namely, of St. Isaac. I also saw the façade of the new winter palace; another mighty result of human will applying human physical powers in a struggle with the laws of nature. The end has been attained, for in one year this palace has risen from its ashes; and it is the largest, I

believe, which exists; equalling the Louvre and the Tuilleries put together.

In order to complete the work at the time appointed by the emperor, unheard-of efforts were necessary. The interior works were continued during the great frosts; 6000 workmen were continually employed; of these a considerable number died daily, but the victims were instantly replaced by other champions brought forward to perish, in their turn, in this inglorious breach. And the sole end of all these sacrifices was to gratify the caprice of one man!

Among people naturally, that is to say, anciently civilised, the life of men is only exposed when common interests, the urgency of which is universally admitted, demand it. But how many generations of monarchs has not the example of Peter the Great corrupted!

During frosts when the thermometer was at 25 to 30 degrees below 0 of Réaumur, 6000 obscure martyrs — martyrs without merit, for their obedience was involuntary — were shut up in halls heated to 30 degrees of Réaumur, in order that the walls might dry more quickly; in entering and leaving this abode of death, destined to become, by virtue of their sacrifice, the abode of vanity, magnificence, and pleasure. Thus these miserable beings would have to endure a difference of 50 to 60 degrees of temperature.

The works in the mines of the Uralian mountains are less inimical to life; and yet the workmen employed at Petersburg were not malefactors. I was told that those who had to paint the interior of the

most highly heated halls were obliged to place on their heads a kind of bonnet of ice, in order to preserve the use of their senses under the burning temperature. Had there been a design to disgust the world with arts, elegance, luxury, and all the pomp of courts, could a more efficacious mode have been taken? And yet the sovereign was called father, by the men immolated before his eyes in prosecuting an object of pure imperial vanity. They were neither spies nor Russian cynics who gave me these details, the authenticity of which I guarantee.

The millions expended on Versailles supported as many families of French workmen as there were Slavonian serfs destroyed by these twelve months in the winter palace; but, by means of this sacrifice, the mandate of the emperor has realised a prodigy; and the palace, completed to the general satisfaction, is going to be inaugurated by marriage fêtes. A prince may be popular in Russia without attaching much value to human life. Nothing colossal is produced without effort; but when a man is in himself both the nation and the government, he ought to impose on himself a law, not to press the great springs of the machine he has the power of moving, except for some object worthy of the effort. To work miracles at the cost of the life of an army of slaves may be great; but it is too great, for both God and man will finally rise to wreak vengeance on these inhuman prodigies. Men have adored the light, the Russians worship the eclipse: when will their eyes be opened?

I do not say that their political system produces nothing good; I simply say that what it does produce is dearly bought.

It is not now for the first time that foreigners have been struck with astonishment at contemplating the attachment of this people to their slavery. The following passage, which is an extract from the correspondence of the Baron Herberstein, ambassador from the Emperor Maximilian, father of Charles V., to the Czar Vassili Ivanowich, I have found in Karamsin.

Did the Russians know all that an attentive reader may gather even from this flattering historian, in whom they glory, and whom foreigners consult with extreme distrust, on account of his partiality as a courtier, they would entreat the emperor to forbid the perusal of his, and of all other historical works, and thus be left in a darkness equally favourable to the repose of the despot and the felicity of his subjects, who believe themselves happy so long as others do not stigmatise them as victims.

Herberstein, in characterising the Russian despotism, writes as follows: — "He (the czar) speaks, and it is done; the life and fortunes of laity and clergy, nobles and burghers, all depend on his supreme will. He is unacquainted with contradiction, and all he does is deemed as equitable as though it were done by Deity; for the Russians are persuaded that their prince is the executor of the Divine decrees. Thus, '*God and the prince have willed,*' '*God and the prince know,*' are common modes of speech among them. Nothing can equal their zeal for his service. One of his principal officers, a venerable gray-haired person, formerly ambassador in Spain, came to meet us on our entry into Moscow. He galloped his horse, and displayed all the activity of a young man, until

the sweat fell from his brow; and when I expressed my surprise to him, '*Ah, Monsieur le Baron,*' he replied, '*we serve our sovereign in a manner altogether different from that in which you serve yours.*'

"I cannot say whether it is the character of the Russian nation which has formed such autocrats, or whether it is the autocrats themselves who have given this character to the nation."

This letter, written more than three centuries ago, describes the Russians precisely as I now see them. Like the ambassador of Maximilian, I still ask, is it the character of the Russian which has made the autocracy, or is it the autocracy which has made the Russian character? and I can no more solve the question than could the German diplomatist.

It appears to me, however, that the influence is reciprocal: the Russian government could never have been established elsewhere than in Russia; and the Russians would never have become what they are under a government differing from that which exists among them.

I will add another citation from the same author, Karamsin. He repeats the observations of the travellers who visited Muscovy in the sixteenth century. "Is it surprising, say these strangers, that the grand prince is rich? He neither gives money to his troops nor his ambassadors; he even takes from these last all the costly things they bring back from foreign lands.* It was thus that the Prince Yaroslowsky, on his return from Spain, was obliged to place in the

* Dickens, in his Travels through the United States, informs us that the same practice is at this day observed in America.

treasury all the chains of gold, the collars, the costly stuffs, and the silver vessels, which the Emperor and the Arch-duke Ferdinand had given him. Nevertheless, these men do not complain; they say, 'The great prince takes away, the great prince will give again.'" It was thus the Russians spoke of the czar in the sixteenth century.

At the present day you will hear, both in Paris and in Petersburg, numbers of Russians dwelling with rapture on the prodigious effects of the word of the emperor; and, in magnifying these results, not one troubles himself with dwelling upon the means. "The word of the emperor can create," they say. Yes; it can animate stones, by destroying human beings. Notwithstanding this little restrictive clause, every Russian is proud of being able to say to us, "You take three years to deliberate on the means of rebuilding a theatre, whilst our emperor raises again, in one year, the largest palace in the universe." And this puerile triumph does not appear to them too dearly bought by the death of a few thousand wretched artisans, sacrificed to that sovereign impatience, that imperial fantasy, which constitutes the national glory. Whilst I, though a Frenchman, see nothing but inhuman ostentation in this achievement, not a single protestation is raised from one end of this immense empire to the other, against the orgies of absolute power.

People and government are here in unison. That a man brought up in the idolatry of self, a man revered as omnipotent by sixty millions of men, or at least of beings that resemble men, should not undertake to put an end to such a state of things — this

does not surprise me: the wonder is, that among the voices that relate these things to the glory of this individual, not one separates itself from the universal chorus, to protest in favour of humanity, against such autocratic miracles. It may be said of the Russians, great and small, that they are drunk with slavery.

CHAP. IX.

THE DROWSKA. — COSTUME OF THE LOWER ORDERS. — WOODEN PAVEMENTS. — PETERSBURG IN THE MORNING. — RESEMBLANCE OF THE CITY TO A BARRACK. — CONTRAST BETWEEN RUSSIA AND SPAIN. — DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYRANNY AND DESPOTISM. — THE TCHIN. — PECULIAR CHARACTER OF THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT. — THE ARTS IN RUSSIA. — A RUSSIAN HOTEL. — THE EVILS TO BE ENCOUNTERED THERE. — THE MICHAEL PALACES. — DEATH OF PAUL I. — THE SPY BAFFLED. — THE NEVA, ITS QUAYS AND BRIDGES. — CABIN OF PETER I. — THE CITADEL, ITS TOMBS AND DUNGEONS. — CHURCH OF ST. ALEXANDER NEWSKI. — RUSSIAN VETERANS. — AUSTERITY OF THE CZAR. — RUSSIAN FAITH IN THE FUTURE, AND ITS REALISATION. — MUNICH AND PETERSBURG COMPARED. — INTERIOR OF THE FORTRESS. — THE IMPERIAL TOMBS. — SUBTERRANEAN PRISON. — RUSSIAN PRISONERS. — MORAL DEGRADATION OF THE HIGHER CLASSES. — CATHOLIC CHURCH. — PRECARIOUS TOLERATION. — TOMB OF THE LAST KING OF POLAND AND OF MOREAU.

It was on the day before yesterday, between nine and ten o'clock, that I obtained the liberty of entering Petersburg.

The city, whose inhabitants are not early risers, gave me at that hour of day the idea of a vast solitude. Now and then I met a few drowskas. The drivers were dressed in the costume of the country. The singular appearance of these men, their horses and carriages, struck me more than anything else on my first view of the city.

The ordinary costume and general appearance of the lower classes of Petersburg, (not the porters, but) the workmen, coachmen, the small trades-

people, &c. &c., is as follows:—on the head is worn either a cap, formed somewhat in the shape of a melon; or a narrow-brimmed hat, low crowned, and wider at the top than the bottom. This head-dress slightly resembles a woman's turban or a Norman cap. It becomes the younger men. Both young and old wear beards. Those of the beaux are silken and carefully combed; those of the old and the careless appear dirty and matted. Their eyes have a peculiar expression, strongly resembling the deceitful glance of Asiatics—so strongly, that in casually observing them, you might fancy yourself in Persia.

Their locks, worn long on each side, fall upon the cheeks and conceal the ears; but their hair is cut closely off from the nape of the neck upwards, which original mode of wearing it leaves the neck behind quite bare, for they have no cravat. The beard sometimes falls upon the breast, sometimes it is cut close round the chin. Much value is attached to this ornament, which accords with the *tout ensemble* of the costume better than with the stocks, the frock coats, and the waistcoats of our young modern fops.

The Russian people have a natural perception of the picturesque; their customs, furniture, utensils, costume and figure, would all furnish subject for the painter, and the corner of every street in Petersburg might suggest material for a picture graceful in its kind.

But to complete the description of the national costume:—in place of our frock and great-coats, is substituted the cafetan, a long and loose Persian robe made of grey, olive, or yet more commonly, of blue

cloth. The folds of this robe, which has no collar, but is cut close to the neck, form an ample drapery, drawn together round the loins by a brightly coloured silken or woollen girdle. The boots are large, and take the form of the foot. On the legs the high leather falls down, or is doubled back over itself, in not ungraceful folds.

The singular form of the drowska is well known; imitations, more or less exact, are to be seen every where. It is the lowest and smallest carriage imaginable, being almost hid by the two or three persons that it carries. It consists of a stuffed seat, protected by four splash-boards of polished leather. This seat is supported on four extremely low wheels, by four little springs, and is placed lengthwise. The driver sits before, his feet almost touching the hocks of his horses, and close behind, astride the seat, his masters are jammed together, for two men sometimes mount the same drowska. I have not seen how the women manage. To these singular vehicles, small as they are, one, two, and sometimes three horses are attached. The shaft horse has his head fixed in a large and raised semi-circle of wood, which gives the idea of a moving triumphal arch. It is not a collar, for the neck of the horse is far below the wood; it is rather a hoop, through which the animal seems to be proudly passing. The different parts of the harness are well adapted to correspond with this not ungraceful hoop, a bell attached to which announces the approach of the drowska.

In observing this lowest of all equipages gliding swiftly between two lines of the lowest built of all

houses, one can scarcely realise the idea of being in Europe. The second horse, fastened on the near side of the former, is yet less confined; his head is left free, and he is kept constantly on the gallop, when even his comrade in harness only trots.

Originally the drowska was nothing more than a rough plank, placed between four little wheels, on axles almost touching the earth. This primitive coach has been greatly improved, but it still preserves its original lightness and its strange appearance. In striding the seat one feels as if mounting some tamed animal; but if this species of horseback is not liked, the party seats himself sideways, holding by the coachman, who always drives at a gallop.

There is a new kind of drowska, in which the seat is not fixed lengthwise, and the body of which has the form of a tilbury. It is an approach to the carriages of other lands, and savours of the English modes; so much the worse, for among all people I love that which is national, and regret that it should ever become obsolete! These scarcely perceptible coaches are rudely jolted over the uneven stones of the streets of Petersburg, though in certain quarters the pavement is improved by two lines of wooden blocks laid down on each side of the way. Over such pavements, which are found in the larger streets, the horses proceed with great rapidity, especially in dry weather, for the rain renders them slippery. These mosaics of the north are expensive by reason of the continual repairs which they require, but they are preferable to the stones.

The movements of the men whom I met appeared stiff and constrained; every gesture expressed a

will which was not their own. The morning is the time for commissions and errands, and not one individual appeared to be walking on his own account. I observed few good looking women, and heard no girlish voices; every thing was dull and regular as in a barrack. Military discipline reigns throughout Russia. The aspect of the country makes me regret Spain as much as though I had been born an Andalusian: it is not however the heat which I want, for that here is almost suffocating; it is light and light-heartedness. Love and liberty for the heart, brilliancy and variety of colour for the eye, are here unknown: in a word, Russia is in all respects the very opposite of Spain. Fancy can almost descry the shadow of death hovering over this portion of the globe.

Now appears a cavalry officer passing at full gallop to *bear an order* to some commanding officer; then a chasseur carrying *an order* to some provincial governor, perhaps at the other extremity of the empire, whither he proceeds in a kibitka, a little Russian chariot, without springs or stuffed seat. This vehicle, driven by an old bearded coachman, rapidly conveys the courier, whose rank would prevent his using a more commodious equipage had he one at his disposal. Next are seen foot soldiers returning from exercise to their quarters, in order to *receive orders* from their captain. This automaton population resembles one side of a chess-board, where a single individual causes the movements of all the pieces, but where the adversary is invisible. One neither moves nor respires here except by an imperial order; consequently everything is dull, formal, and

spiritless. Silence presides over and paralyses life. Officers, coachmen, Cossacks, serfs, courtiers, all servants under the same master, blindly obey the orders which they do not understand; it is certainly the perfection of discipline; but the sight of such perfection does not gratify me; so much regularity can only be obtained by the entire absence of independence.

Among this people bereft of time and of will, we see only bodies without souls, and tremble to think that, for so vast a multitude of arms and legs, there is only one head. Despotism is a union of impatience and of indolence; with a little more forbearance on the part of the governing power, and of activity on the part of the people, equal results might be obtained at a far cheaper cost; but what then would become of tyranny?

If I am reproached for confounding despotism with tyranny, I answer that I do so with design. They are such near relatives, that they never fail to unite in secret to the misfortune of mankind. Under a despotism, tyranny may maintain itself the longer, because it preserves the mask.

When Peter the Great established what is here called the *tchin*, that is to say, when he applied the military system to the general administration of the empire, he changed his nation into a regiment of mutes, of which he declared himself and his successors the hereditary colonels.

Let the reader imagine the ambition, the rivalry, and all the other passions of war in operation during a state of peace; let his mind conceive an absence of all that constitutes social and domestic happiness

and, in place of these, let him picture to himself the universal agitation of an ever-restless though secret intrigue, — secret, because the mask is essential to success; finally, let him realise the idea of the almost complete apparent triumph of the will of one man over the will of God, and he will understand Russia.

As the morning advances, the city becomes more noisy, without however appearing more gay; one sees only carriages, little distinguished for elegance, carrying at the full speed of their two, four, or six horses, people always in haste, because their life is passed in thus *making their way*. Pleasure without any ulterior aim — pleasure for its own sake, is here a thing unknown.

Thus, almost all the great *artistes* who visit Russia to reap the fruit of the fame they have acquired elsewhere, never remain beyond a very brief period; if ever they prolong their stay, they wrong their talents. The air of this country is unfavourable to the finer arts. Productions that spring spontaneously elsewhere, will only here grow in the hot house. Russian art will never be a hardy plant.

At the Hotel de Coulon, I found a degenerated French innkeeper. His house is at present nearly full, on account of the marriage of the Grand Duchess Marie; and he appeared almost annoyed at being obliged to receive another guest, and consequently gave himself little trouble to accommodate me. After several parleys, I was at length established on the second floor, in suffocating apartments, consisting of an *entrée*, a *salon*, and a bed-chamber, the whole without curtains or window blinds, though there is a sun for twenty-two hours daily above the horizon,

the oblique rays of which penetrate more fully into the houses than the sun of Africa, which falls direct upon the roofs. The air of this lodging resembles that of a limekiln choked with dust, and charged with exhalations of insects mingled with musk, forming altogether an atmosphere that is insupportable.

Scarcely was I installed in this abode than (the fatigue of the night having got the better of my curiosity, which usually impels me to sally forth and lose myself in a large unknown city) I lay down, wrapped in a cloak, on an immense leather sofa, and slept profoundly during — three minutes.

At the end of this time I woke in a fever, and on casting my eyes upon the cloak, what a sight awaited them! — A brown but living mass: things must be called by their proper name — I was covered, I was devoured with bugs. Russia is, in this respect, not a whit inferior to Spain: but in the south we can both console and secure ourselves in the open air; here we remain imprisoned with the enemy, and the war is consequently more sanguine. I began throwing off my clothes, and calling for help. What a prospect for the night! This thought made me cry out more lustily. A Russian waiter appeared. I made him understand that I wished to see his master. The master kept me waiting a long time, and when he at length did come, and was informed of the nature of my trouble, he began to laugh, and soon left the room, telling me that I should become accustomed to it, for that it was the same every where in Petersburg. He first advised me however never to seat myself on a Russian sofa, because the domestics, who always

carry about with them legions of insects, sleep on these articles of furniture. To tranquillise me he further stated, that the vermin would not follow me if I kept at a proper distance from the furniture in which they had fixed their abode.

The inns of Petersburg resemble caravanserais, where the traveller is simply housed, but not waited upon, unless by his own servants. Mine, not understanding the Russian language, is not only useless to me but troublesome, for I have to take care of him as well as myself!

However, his Italian quickness soon discovered in one of the dark corridors of this walled desert, called L'Hôtel Coulon, a footman, out of place, who speaks German, and whom the keeper of the hotel recommended. I engaged him, and told him of my distress. He immediately procured me a light iron bedstead, the mattrass for which, I had stuffed with the freshest straw that could be obtained, and caused the four feet to be placed in as many jars of water, in the middle of the chamber, the furniture of which I also had removed. Thus intrenched for the night, I dressed, and attended by the footman, whom I had desired to forbear directing me, I issued from this magnificent hotel — a palace without, and an ornamented stable within.

The hotel Coulon opens on a kind of "*square*," which is tolerably lively for this city. On one side of the square stands the new Michael Palace, the stately abode of the Grand Duke Michael, brother of the emperor. It was built for the Emperor Alexander, who never inhabited it. The other sides of the square are inclosed by fine ranges of buildings with noble

streets opening between. Scarcely had I passed the new Michael Palace than I found myself before the old. It is a vast, square, and gloomy fabric, differing in all respects from the elegant modern edifice of the same name.

If the men are silent in Russia, the stones speak with a lamentable voice. I am not surprised that the Russians neglect their ancient architectural monuments; these are witnesses of their history, which, for the most part, they are glad to forget. When I observed the black steps, the deep canals, the massive bridges, and the deserted porticos of this ill-omened palace, I asked its name; and the answer called to my mind the catastrophe which placed Alexander on the throne, while all the circumstances of the dark scene which terminated the reign of Paul I. presented themselves to my imagination.

Nor was this all: by a kind of savage irony there had been placed before the principal gate of the sinister edifice, before the death, and by the order of the Emperor Paul, the equestrian statue of his brother Peter III., another victim whose memory the emperor delighted to honour in order to dishonour that of his mother. What tragedies are played in cold blood in this land, where ambition and even hate are calm in appearance! With the people of the south, their passion reconciles me, in some measure, to their cruelty; but the calculating reserve, and the coldness of the men of the north, adds to crime the varnish of hypocrisy. Snow is a mask. Here man appears gentle because he is impassible; but murder without hate inspires me with more horror than vindictive assassination. The more nearly I can recognise an

involuntary impulse in the commission of evil, the more I feel consoled. Unfortunately, it was the calculation of interest and prudence, and not the impulses of anger, which presided over the murder of Paul. Good Russians pretend that the conspirators had only intended to place him in prison. I have seen the secret door opening into the garden, which led to the apartment of the emperor by a private staircase, up which Pahlen caused the assassins to ascend. His communication with them on the evening before was to this effect: — "You will either have killed the emperor by five o'clock to-morrow morning, or you will be denounced by me to the emperor, at half past five, as conspirators." The result of this eloquent and laconic harangue need not be questioned.

At five o'clock on the following morning, Alexander was an emperor, and also an imputed parricide, although he had only consented (this is true, I believe) to the confinement of his father, in order to save his mother from prison and perhaps death, to protect himself from a similar fate, and to preserve his country from the rage and caprice of an insane autocrat.

At the present day, the Russians pass the old Michael Palace without daring to look at it. In the schools, and elsewhere, the death of the Emperor Paul is forbidden to be mentioned or even believed.

I am astonished that this palace of inconvenient recollections has not been pulled down. The traveller congratulates himself at the sight of a monument whose antique appearance is remarkable in a land where despotism renders every thing uniform and

new; where the reigning notion effaces daily the traces of the past. Its square and solid form, its deep moats, tragic associations, and secret gates and staircases favourable to crime, impart to it an imposing air, which is a rare advantage in Petersburg. At each step I take I am amazed to observe the confusion that has been every where made in this city between two arts so very different as those of architecture and decoration. Peter the Great and his successors seem to have taken their capital for a theatre.

I was struck with the startled air of my guide, when I questioned him, in the most easy and natural manner that I could assume, on the events that had taken place in the old palace. The physiognomy of this man replied, "it is easy to see you are a new comer." Surprise, fear, mistrust, affected innocence, pretended ignorance, the experience of an old soldier who would not easily be duped, took possession, by turns, of his countenance, and made it a book equally instructing and amusing to peruse. When your spy is at fault by reason of your apparent security, the expression of his face is truly grotesque; for he believes himself compromised by you so soon as he sees that you do not fear being compromised by him. The spy thinks only of his vocation; and if you escape his nets, he begins at once to imagine that he is going to fall into yours.

A promenade through the streets of Petersburg, under the charge of a *domestique de place*, is not without interest, and little resembles a progress through the capitals of other civilised lands. One thing is singularly connected with and dependent on another

in a state governed with so close a logic as that which presides over the policy of Russia.

After leaving the old and tragical Michael Palace, I crossed a large square resembling the Champ de Mars at Paris, so spacious is it and so empty. On one side is a public garden, on the other a few houses; there is sand instead of pavement in the middle of the area, and dust in every part of. This immense square, the form of which is vague and undefined, extends to the Neva, near which termination is a bronze statue of Suwaroff.

The Neva, its bridges and quays, form the real glory of Petersburg. The scene here is so vast, that all the rest seems little in comparison. The Neva is like a vessel, so full that its brim disappears under the water, which is ready to flow over on every side. Venice and Amsterdam appear to me better protected against the sea than St. Petersburg.

The vicinity of a river, large as a lake, and which flows on a level with the land through a marshy plain, lost in the mists of the atmosphere and the vapours of the sea, was assuredly of all the sites in the world the least favourable for the foundation of a capital. The water will here, sooner or later, teach a lesson to human pride. The granite itself is no security against the work of winters in this humid ice-house, where the foundations of rock and the ramparts of the famous citadel, built by Peter the Great, have already twice given way. They have been repaired, and will be yet again, in order to preserve this *chef-d'œuvre* of human pride and human will.

I wished at once to cross the bridge in order to examine it more nearly; but my servant first con-

ducted me, in face of the fortress, to the house of Peter the Great, which is separated from it by a road and an open piece of ground.

It is a cabin, preserved, as is said, in the same state as that in which the emperor left it. In the citadel the emperors are now buried, and the prisoners of state detained—singular manner of honouring the dead! In thinking of all the tears shed there, *under* the tombs of the sovereigns of Russia, one is reminded of the funerals of some Asian kings. A tomb bedewed with blood would, in my eyes, be less impious: tears flow for a longer period, and are perhaps accompanied with deeper pangs.

During the time that the imperial artisan inhabited the cabin, his future capital was built beneath his eye. It should be admitted in his praise, that, at that period, he thought much less of the palace than of the city.

One of the chambers of this illustrious cottage, that, namely, which was the workshop of the princely carpenter, is now transformed into a chapel. It is entered with as much reverence as are the most sacred churches in the empire. The Russians are ever ready to make saints of their heroes. They delight in confounding the dreadful virtues of their masters with the benevolent power of their patrons, and endeavour to view the cruelties of history through the veil of faith.

Another Russian hero, in my opinion little deserving of admiration, has been sanctified by the Greek priests; I mean Alexander Newski—a model of prudence, but a martyr neither to piety nor to generosity. The national church has canonised this wise rather

than heroic prince—this Ulysses among the saints. An enormous convent has been built around his reliques.

The tomb, enclosed within the church of Saint Alexander, is in itself an edifice. It consists of an altar of massive silver, surmounted with a species of pyramid of the same metal, which rises to the vault of a vast church. The convent, the church, and the cenotaph form one of the wonders of Russia. I contemplated them with more astonishment than admiration; for though the costliness of this pious work is immense, the rules of taste and of art have been little heeded in its construction.

In the cabin of the Czar, I was shown a boat of his own building, and several other objects religiously preserved, and placed under the guard of a veteran soldier. In Russia, churches, palaces, public places, and many private houses, are entrusted to the keeping of military pensioners. These unfortunate beings would be left without means of subsistence in their old age, unless they were, on leaving the barracks, converted into porters. In such posts they retain their long military capotes, which are made of coarse wool, and are generally much worn and dirty. At each visit that you make, men, thus clad, receive you at the gates of the public buildings and at the doors of the houses. They are spectres in uniform that serve to remind one of the discipline which here rules over every thing. Petersburg is a camp metamorphosed into a city. The veteran who kept guard in the imperial cottage, after having lighted several wax-tapers in the chapel, led me to the sleeping apartment of Peter the Great, emperor of all the Russias. A

carpenter of our days would not lodge his apprentice in such a place.

This glorious austerity illustrates the epoch and the country as much as the man. In Russia, at that time, every thing was sacrificed to the future; every one was employed in building the palaces of their yet unborn masters; and the original founders of the magnificent edifices, not experiencing themselves the wants of luxury, were content to be the purveyors of the future civilisation, and took pride in preparing fitting abodes for the unknown potentates who were to follow them. There is certainly a greatness of mind evidenced in this care which a chieftain and his people take for the power, and even the vanity, of the generations that are yet to come. The reliance which the living have thus placed in the glory of their distant posterity has something about it which is noble and original. It is a disinterested and poetical sentiment, far loftier than the respect which men and nations are accustomed to entertain for their ancestors.

Elsewhere, great cities abound with monuments raised in memory of the past. St. Petersburg, in all its magnificence and immensity, is a trophy raised by the Russians to the greatness of the future. The hope which produces such efforts appears to me sublime. Never, since the construction of the Jewish temple, has the faith of a people in its own destinies raised up from the earth a greater wonder than St. Petersburg. And what renders more truly admirable this legacy, left by one man to his ambitious country, is, that it has been accepted by history.

The prophecy of Peter the Giant, sculptured upon

blocks of granite reared in the sea, has been fulfilled before the eyes of the universe. This is the first instance in which pride has appeared to me really worthy of admiration.

The history of Russia does not, however, date, as the ignorant and superficial in Europe seem to suppose, from the reign of Peter I.; it is Moscow which explains St. Petersburg.

The deliverance of Muscovy, after long ages of invasion, and afterwards the siege and capture of Kasan by Ivan the Terrible, the determined struggles with Sweden, and many other brilliant as well as patient deeds of arms, justified the proud attitude of Peter the Great, and the humble confidence of his people. Faith in the unknown is always imposing. This man of iron had a right to put his trust in the future: characters like his produce those results which others only hope. I can see him, in all the simplicity of greatness, seated in the threshold of this cabin, planning and preparing against Europe, a city, a nation, and a history. The grandeur of Petersburg is not unmeaning. This mighty metropolis, ruling over its icy marshes, in order from thence to rule the world, is superb — more superb to the mind than to the eye! Yet it may not be forgotten, that one hundred thousand men, victims of obedience, were lost in converting the pestilential swamps into a capital.

Germany is at present witnessing the accomplishment of a masterpiece of critical art—one of its cities is being learnedly transformed into a city of ancient Greece or Italy. But New Munich wants an ancient population; Petersburg was wanted by the modern Russians.

On leaving the house of Peter the Great, I again passed before the bridge of the Neva (which leads to the Islands), and entered the celebrated fortress of Petersburg.

I have already remarked that this edifice, of which the name alone inspires fear, has twice had its ramparts and its granite foundations undermined, although it is not yet 140 years old. What a struggle! The stones here seem to suffer violence like the men.

I was not permitted to see the prisons: there are dungeons under the water, and there are others under the roofs, all of which are full of human beings. I was only allowed to inspect the church, which incloses the tombs of the reigning family. My eyes were on these tombs while I was yet searching for them, so difficult was it to imagine that a square stone, of about the length and breadth of a bed, newly covered with a green cloth embroidered with the imperial arms, could be the cemetery of the Empress Catherine I., of Peter I., Catherine II., and of so many other princes, down to the Emperor Alexander.

The Greek religion banishes sculpture from its churches, by which they lose in pomp and religious magnificence more than they gain in mystical character*; while at the same time it accommodates itself to gilt work, chasings, and to pictures which do not show a very pure taste. The Greeks are the children of the Iconoclasts.† In Russia they have ventured to mitigate the doctrine of their fathers; but they might have gone further than they have done.

* En mysticité. † Destroyers of images.

In this funereal citadel, the dead appeared to me more free than the living. If it had been a philosophical idea which suggested the inclosing in the same tomb the prisoners of the emperor and the prisoners of death — the conspirators and the monarchs against whom they conspired — I should respect it; but I see in it nothing more than the cynicism of absolute power — the brutal security of a despotism which feels itself safe. Strong in its superhuman power, it rises above the little humane delicacies, the observance of which is advisable in common governments. A Russian emperor is so full of what is due to himself, that he cannot afford to have his justice lost sight of in that of God's. We royalist *revolutionaries* of Western Europe see only in a prisoner of state at Petersburg an innocent victim of despotism; the Russians view him as a reprobate. Every sound appeared to me a complaint; the stones groaned beneath my feet. Oh, how I pity the prisoners of this fortress! If the existence of the Russians confined under the earth, is to be judged of by inferences drawn from the existence of the Russians who live above, there is, indeed, cause to shudder! A thrill of horror passed through me as I thought that the most stedfast fidelity, the most scrupulous probity, could secure no man from the subterranean prisons of the citadel of Petersburg, and my heart dilated, and my respiration came more freely, as I repassed the moats which defend this gloomy abode, and separate it from the rest of the world.

Who would not pity this people? The Russians, I speak now of the higher classes, are living under the influences of an ignorance and of prejudices which

they themselves no longer possess. The affectation of resignation appears to me the lowest depth of abjectness into which an enslaved nation can fall: revolt or despair would be doubtless more terrible, but less ignominious. Weakness so degraded that it dare not indulge itself even in complaint, that consolation of the lower animal creation fear calmed by its own excess — this is a moral phenomenon which cannot be witnessed without calling forth tears of horror.

After visiting the sepulchre of the Russian sovereigns, I proceeded to the Catholic church, the services of which are conducted by Dominican monks. I went there to demand a mass for an anniversary which none of my travels have hitherto prevented my commemorating in a Catholic church. The Dominican convent is situated in the Perspective Newski, the finest street in Petersburg. The church is not magnificent, but decent; the cloisters are solitary, the courts encumbered with rubbish of mason work. An air of gloom reigns throughout the community, which, notwithstanding the toleration it enjoys, appears to possess little wealth, and still less sense of security. In Russia toleration has no guarantee, either in public opinion, or in the constitution of the state: like everything else it is a favour conceded by one man; and that man may withdraw to-morrow what he has granted to-day.

While waiting for the prior in the church, I saw beneath my feet a stone on which was inscribed a name that awoke in me some emotion — Poniatowski! the royal victim of folly. This too credulous lover of Catherine II. is buried here without any mark of

distinction; but though despoiled of the majesty of the throne, there remains for him the majesty of misfortune. The troubles of this prince, his blind fatuity punished so cruelly, and the perfidious policy of his enemies, attract the attention of all Christians and of all travellers to his obscure tomb.

Near to the exiled king has been placed the mutilated body of Moreau. The Emperor Alexander caused it to be brought there from Dresden. The idea of placing together the remains of two men so greatly to be pitied, in order to unite in the same prayer the memory of their disappointed destiny, appears to me one of the greatest conceptions of this prince, who, be it remembered, was truly great when he entered a city from whence Napoleon was flying.

Towards four o'clock in the evening I began, for the first time, to recollect that I had not come to Russia merely to inspect curious monuments of art, and to enter into the reflections, more or less philosophical, which they might suggest; and I hastened to the French ambassador's.

There I found my oversight had been great. The marriage of the Grand Duchess Marie was to take place on the day after the morrow, and I had arrived too late to be presented previously. To miss this ceremony of the court, in a land where the court is every thing, would be to lose my journey.

CHAP. X.

VISIT TO THE ISLANDS. — CHARACTER OF THE SCENERY. — ARTIFICIAL BEAUTIES. — COMPARISON BETWEEN RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH TASTE. — AIM AND CHARACTERISTICS OF RUSSIAN CIVILISATION. — HAPPINESS IMPOSSIBLE IN RUSSIA. — FASHIONABLE LIFE IN ST. PETERSBURG. — EQUALITY UNDER DESPOTISM. — CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY. — ABSOLUTE POWER. — PAVILION OF THE EMPRESS. — VERMIN IN THE HOUSES AND PALACES OF ST. PETERSBURG. — COSTUME OF THE LOWER ORDERS. — BEAUTY OF THE MEN WHEN OF PURE SLAVONIAN RACE. — THE WOMEN. — CONDITION OF THE RUSSIAN PEASANTRY. — THE SALE OF SERFS. — COMMERCE CAN ALONE ALTER THE PRESENT STATE OF THINGS. — CARE TAKEN TO CONCEAL THE TRUTH FROM FOREIGNERS. — RELIGIOUS USURPATION OF PETER THE GREAT. — HIS CHARACTER AND MONSTROUS CRUELTIES. — CULPABILITY OF THE ARISTOCRACY. — THE AUTHOR SUSPECTED. — STATE OF MEDICAL ART IN RUSSIA. — UNIVERSAL MYSTERY. — PERMISSION TO BE PRESENT AT THE MARRIAGE OF THE GRAND DUCHESS.

I AM just returned from visiting the Islands. They form an agreeable marsh; never was the vase better concealed by the flowers. A shallow, left dry during the summer, owing to the channels that intersect it serving as drains to the soil, planted with superb groves of birch, and covered with numerous charming villas — such is the tract called the Islands. The avenues of birch, which, together with pines, are the only trees indigenous to these icy plains, create an illusion that might lead the traveller to imagine him-

self in an English park. This vast garden overspread with "*villas*" and "*cottages*,"* serves instead of the country to the inhabitants of Petersburg: it is the camp of the courtiers, thickly inhabited during a brief portion of the year, and totally deserted during the remainder.

The district of the Islands is reached by various excellent carriage roads, connected with bridges thrown over the different arms of the sea.

In wandering among its shady alleys, it is not difficult to imagine one's self in the country, but it is a monotonous and artificial country. No undulations of the ground, always the same kind of trees, — how is it possible to produce pictorial effect from such materials! Under this zone the plants of the hot-house, the fruits of the tropics, and even the gold and precious stones of the mines, are less rare than our commonest forest trees. With wealth every thing may be procured here that can exist under glass, and this is much towards furnishing the scenery of a fairy tale, but it is not sufficient to make a park. One of the groves of chestnut or beech which beautify our hills would be a marvel in Petersburg. Italian houses surrounded by Laponian trees, and filled with the flowers of all countries, form a contrast which is singular rather than agreeable.

The Parisians, who never forget Paris, call the tract of the Islands the Russian Champs Elysées, but it is larger, more rural, and yet more adorned and more artificial, than our Parisian promenade. It is

* The allusion here is evidently made to a *London* rather than to an "*English*" park. — *Trans.*

also farther distant from the fashionable quarters, and includes both town and country. At one moment you may suppose yourself looking upon real woods, fields, and villages; in the next, the view of houses in the shape of temples, of pilasters forming the framework of hot-houses, of colonnaded palaces, of theatres with antique peristyles, prove that you have not left the city.

The Russians are rightly proud of this garden raised at so much expence on the spongy soil of Petersburg. But if Nature is conquered, she remembers her defeat, and submits with bad grace. Happy the lands where heaven and earth unite and mutually vie in embellishing the abodes of man, and in rendering his life pleasant and easy!

I should insist less on the disadvantages of this unfavoured land, I should not regret so greatly, while travelling in the north, the sun of the south, if the Russians affected less to undervalue the gifts of which their country is deprived. Their perfect content extends even to the climate and the soil; naturally given to boasting, they have the folly to glory even in the physical as well as the social aspect which surrounds them. These pretensions prevent my bearing so resignedly as I ought to do, and as I had intended, with all the inconveniences of northern countries.

The delta formed between the city and one of the *embouchures* of the Neva, is now entirely covered by this species of park; it is nevertheless included within the precincts of Petersburg: the Russian cities embrace the country also. This tract would have become one of the most populous quar-

ters of the new city, had the plan of the founder been more exactly followed. But, little by little, Petersburg receded from the river, southward, in the hope of escaping the inundations; and the marshy isles have been reserved exclusively for the summer residences of the most distinguished courtiers. These houses are half-concealed by water and snow for nine months of the year, during which time the wolves roam freely round the pavilion of the Empress; but during the remaining three months, nothing can exceed the profusion of flowers which the houses display. Nevertheless, under all this factitious elegance, the character of the people betrays itself; a passion for display is the ruling passion of the Russians: thus, in their drawing-rooms, the flowers are not placed in such manner as may render the interior of the apartment more agreeable, but so as to attract admiration from without; precisely the contrary of what we see in England, where, above all things, people shrink from *hanging out a sign in the streets.* The English are, of all the people on the earth, those who have best known how to substitute taste for style: their public buildings are *chefs-d'œuvre* of the ridiculous; their private houses are models of elegance and good sense.

Among the Islands, all the houses and all the roads resemble each other. The shade of the birch trees is transparent, but under the sun of the North a very thick foliage is not required. Canals, lakes, meadows, groves, cottages, villas and alleys, follow each other in constant succession. This dreamy landscape pleases without interesting, without piquing the curiosity; but it gives the idea of repose, and repose is a

precious thing at the Court of Russia, even though it be not valued there as it ought to be.

A distant pine forest rears at intervals its thin and spiry foliage above the roofs of some *villas*, built of planks and painted. These remembrances of solitude pierce through the ephemeral gaiety of the gardens, as though to witness to the rigour of winter, and the neighbourhood of Finland.

The aim of civilisation in the North is serious. There, society is the fruit, not of human pleasures, not of interests and passions easily satisfied, but of a will ever persisting and ever thwarted, which urges the people to incomprehensible efforts. There, if individuals unite together, it is to struggle with a rebellious nature, which unwillingly responds to the demands made upon her.

This dulness and stubbornness in the external world engender a gloom which accounts to me for the tragedies in the political world so frequent at this court. Here the drama is enacted in actual life, whilst the theatre is occupied with farce. Empty amusements are those alone permitted in Russia. Under such an order of things, real life is too serious an affair to admit a grave and thoughtful literature. Low comedy, the idyll, and the apologue well veiled, can alone flourish in presence of so terrible a reality. If in this inhospitable clime the precautions of despotism shall yet further increase the difficulties of existence, all happiness will be taken from man,—repose will become impossible. Peace, felicity—these words here are as vague as is that of Paradise. Idleness without ease, inertia without quiet—such are the inevitable results of the Boreal Autocracy.

The Russians enjoy but very little of the country which they have created at the gate of their city. The women pass the summer at the Islands, and the winter at Petersburg. They rise late; spend the day at their toilets, the evening in visits, and the night at play. To forget themselves, to lose themselves in a round of excitement, such is the apparent end of their existence.

The summer of the Islands commences in the middle of June and lasts till the end of August. During these two months there is not generally (though with the exception of the present year) more than a week of hot weather. The evenings are damp, the night atmosphere clear, but cloudy above, the days grey and misty. Life would here become insupportably dull and melancholy to the individual who should allow himself to reflect. In Russia, to converse is to conspire, to think is to revolt: thought is not merely a crime, it is a misfortune also.

Man thinks only with a view of ameliorating his lot and that of his fellows, but when he can do nothing and change nothing, thought does but prey upon and envenom the mind, for lack of other employment. This is the reason why, in the Russian world of fashion, people of all ages join in the dance.

As soon as the summer is over, a rain, fine as the points of needles, falls for weeks without any cessation. In two days the birch trees of the isles may be seen stript of their leaves, the houses of their flowers and their inhabitants, and the roads and bridges crowded with carriages, drowskas, and carts engaged in the removal of furniture, all the different kinds of which

are heaped together with a slovenliness and disorder natural to the Slavonian race. It is thus that the rich man of the North, awaking from the too fleeting illusions of his summer, flies before the north-east wind, leaving the bears and wolves to re-enter into possession of their legitimate domain. Silence resumes its ancient rights over these icy swamps, and for nine months, the frivolous society of the city of wood take refuge in the city of stone. From this change of season they experience little inconvenience; for in Petersburg the snows of the winter nights reflect almost as much light as is shed by the summer sun, and the Russian stoves give more heat than its obliquely falling rays.

That which yearly occurs in the islands will be the fate one day of the entire city. Should this capital, without roots in history, be forgotten for even a brief space by the sovereign, should a new policy direct his attention elsewhere, the granite hid under the water would crumble away, the inundated low lands would return to their natural state, and the guests of solitude would again take possession of their lair.

These ideas occupy the mind of every foreigner who traverses the streets of Petersburg; no one believes in the duration of the marvellous city. But little meditation (and what traveller worthy of his occupation does not meditate?) enables the mind to prefigure such a war, such a change in the course of policy, as would cause this creation of Peter I. to disappear like a soap bubble in the air.

In no other place have I been so impressed with the instability of human things. Often in Paris and in London have I said to myself, a time will come when

this noisy abode will be more silent than Athens or Rome, Syracuse or Carthage; but to no man is it given to foresee the hour nor the immediate cause of the destruction; whereas, the disappearing of St. Petersburg may be foreseen, it may take place to-morrow, in the midst of the triumphant songs of its victorious people. The decline of other capitals follows the destruction of their inhabitants, but this will perish at the moment even when the Russians will see their power extending. I believe in the duration of Petersburg, just as I believe in that of a political system, or in the constancy of man. This is what cannot be said of any other city in the world.

What a tremendous power is that which can thus cause a metropolis to spring up in the wilderness, and which, with one word, can restore to solitude all that it has taken! Here real existence seems to belong only to the sovereign: the fate, the power, the will of an entire people are all centred in one single head. The Emperor is the personification of social power; beneath him reigns the equality that forms the dream of the modern Gallo-American democrats, the Fourriérists, &c. But the Russians acknowledge a cause of storm that is unknown to others, the wrath of this emperor. Republican or monarchical tyranny is preferable to autocratic equality. I fear nothing so much as a strict logic applied to politics. If France has been practically prosperous during the last ten years, it is, perhaps, because the apparent absurdity which presides over her affairs is a high practical wisdom; action, instead of speculation, now governs us.

In Russia the spirit of despotism always exerts itself

with a mathematical rigour, and the result of such extreme proceeding is an extreme oppression. In beholding this effect of an inflexible policy we feel shocked, and ask ourselves, with a kind of terror, how comes it that there is so little humanity in the actions of man? But to tremble is not to disdain; we never despise that which excites our fear.

In contemplating Petersburg, and in reflecting on the dreadful existence of the inhabitants of this camp of granite, one might be led to doubt the compassion of Deity. There is presented here a mystery that is incomprehensible, and at the same time a greatness which is prodigious. Despotism thus organised becomes an inexhaustible subject for observation and meditation. This colossal empire, which rises before me all at once in the east of Europe—of that Europe, where society is suffering from the decay of all recognised authority—appears to me like a resurrection. I feel as though in the presence of some nation of the Old Testament, and I stop with fear mingled with curiosity before the feet of the ante-diluvian giant.

The first view of society in Russia shows that its arrangements, as contrived by the Russians themselves, are only adapted to their own social system: he must be a Russian who would live in Russia, even though outwardly every thing may appear to pass as in other places. The difference lies in the foundations of things.

It was a review of the fashionable world which I took this evening at the islands. The fashionable world, they say, is the same every where; nevertheless each society has a soul, and this soul will be instructed, like any other, by the fairy which is called

civilisation, and which is nothing more than the customs of the age.

This evening all the city of Petersburg, that is to say, the court and its followers, were at the islands; not for the pure pleasure of promenading on a fine day, such a pleasure would appear insipid to the Russian courtiers, but to see the *packet-boat* of the Empress, a spectacle of which they never tire. Here every sovereign is a god, every princess is an Armida or a Cleopatra. The train of these changeable divinities never changes: it is composed of a people ever equally faithful; the reigning prince is always in the fashion with the Russian people.

Nevertheless these submissive men, let them say and do their best, are forced and constrained in their enthusiasm. A people without liberty has instincts, but not sentiments; and their instincts often manifest themselves in an officious and little delicate manner. The emperors of Russia must be overwhelmed with submission: sometimes the incense wearies the idol. In fact, this worship admits of terrible interludes. The Russian government is an absolute monarchy moderated by assassination; and when the prince is not under the influence of lassitude, he is under that of terror. He lives, therefore, between fear and disgust. If the pride of the despot must have slaves, the feelings of the man must yearn for equals; but a czar has no equals: etiquette and jealousy maintain invidious guard around his solitary heart. He is more to be pitied than even his people, especially if he possesses any amiable qualities.

I hear much boast made of the domestic happiness of the Emperor Nicholas, but I see in it the consola-

tions of a superior mind, rather than the proof of real happiness. Consolation is not felicity; on the contrary, the remedy proves the evil; an emperor of Russia must have a heart like other men if he has one at all. So much for the over-lauded private virtues of the Emperor Nicholas.

This evening the Empress, having proceeded from Peterhoff by sea, landed at her pavilion on the islands, where she will remain until the marriage of her daughter, which is to be celebrated to-morrow, in the new winter palace. While she remains at the islands, the leafy shade which surrounds her pavilion serves as a shelter during the day for her regiment of chevalier guards, one of the finest in the army.

We arrived too late to see her leave her sacred vessel, but we found the crowd still under the excitement caused by the rapid transit of the imperial star. The only tumults possible in Russia are those caused by the struggles of flatterers. This evening the human effervescence resembled the agitation of the waves, that continue boiling in the track of some mighty vessel long after she has entered port.

At last, then, I have breathed the air of the court! though the deities who exhale it upon mortals are still unseen.

It is now one o'clock in the morning; the sun is about to rise, and I cannot yet sleep: I will, therefore, finish my night as I commenced it, by writing *without lights.*

Notwithstanding Russian pretensions to elegance, foreigners cannot find in all Petersburg one hotel that is endurable. The great lords bring with them, from the interior of the empire, a suite which is always

numerous. Man is their property and their luxury. The moment the valets are left alone in the apartments of their masters, they squat themselves, in oriental fashion, on the seats and couches, which they fill with vermin. These creatures pass into the walls and floors, and in a few days the house becomes infested past all remedy; for the impossibility of airing the houses in winter perpetuates the evil from year to year.

The new imperial palace, built at such cost of life and money, is already full of these vermin. It might be said, that the wretched workmen who were killed in order to ornament with greater celerity the habitation of their master, have avenged their own death by inoculating with their vermin those homicidal walls. If the palace is infected by these nocturnal foes, how should I be able to sleep at Coulons? I have given up the idea; but the clearness of the night consoles me for every thing.

On returning from the islands about midnight, I again went out on foot, and occupied my mind with reviewing the scenes and conversations which had most interested me during the day; of these I will presently give the summary.

My solitary walk led me to the beautiful street called the Perspective Newski. I saw in the twilight, shining from afar, the little pillars of the tower of the Admiralty, surmounted with its lofty metallic spire. The spire of this Christian minaret is more taper than any Gothic steeple. It is gilded all over with the gold of the ducats sent as a present to the emperor Peter I. by the States of the Netherlands.

The revolting dirtiness of this inn-chamber, and

the almost fabulous magnificence of that building, present a correct picture of Petersburg. Contrasts are not wanting in a city where Europe and Asia exhibit themselves to each other in mutual spectacle. The people are handsome. The men of pure Slavonian race, brought from the interior by the rich nobles, who either retain them in their service, or permit them for a certain period to carry on various trades in the city, are remarkable for their fair hair, their rosy complexions, and yet more for their perfect profiles, which equal those of Grecian statues. Their eyes have the oval Asiatic shape, with the colouring of the North; they are generally of a light blue, and unite a singular expression of gentleness, grace, and cunning. This expression, always restless, gives to the iris those changing hues, which vary from the green of the serpent, and the grey of the cat, to the black of the gazelle, though the ground colour still remains blue. The mouth, adorned with a gold and silky moustache, is beautifully formed, and the brilliant whiteness of the teeth lights up the whole countenance. The latter are sometimes sharp and pointed, when they resemble those of the tiger, but more commonly their shape is perfectly regular. The costume of these men is always original. It consists, either of the Greek tunic, with a lively-coloured girdle, the Persian robe, or the short Russian pelisse lined with sheepskin, the wool of which is turned outwards or inwards according to the season.

The women of the lower orders are less handsome; but few are met in the streets, and those few have little to attract: they appear degraded and stupified. It is a singular fact, that the men take pains with

their dress, and the women neglect it: this is perhaps owing to the former being attached by service to the houses of the nobles. The women have a clumsy carriage; they wear heavy boots, which deform the foot: their figures are without elegance; and their complexions, unlike those of the men, lose all freshness and clearness even while they are yet young. Their little Russian coats, short, and open before, are trimmed with fur, which is almost always hanging in rags. This costume would be pretty if it was less shabby, and if the effect was not generally spoilt by deformity or revolting dirtiness of person. The national head-dress of the Russian women is handsome, but it has become rare; being now only worn, I am told, by nurses, and by the ladies of the court on days of ceremony. It is a species of pasteboard tower, gilt, embroidered, and much widened at the top.

The accoutrements of the horses are picturesque, and the horses themselves show speed and blood; but the equipages that I saw this evening at the islands, not excepting those of the highest nobles, were not elegant, nor even clean. This accounts to me for the disorder and carelessness of the servants of the hereditary Grand Duke, and for the clumsiness and wretched varnish of that prince's carriages, which I noticed at Ems. Magnificence on a large scale, a gaudy luxury, gilded trappings, and an air of showy grandeur, are natural to the Russian nobles; but elegance, carefulness, and cleanliness are things unknown. I have listened this evening to several curious traits, illustrative of what we call the slavery of the Russian peasants.

It is difficult for us to form a just idea of the real

position of this class of men, who live in the possession of no acknowledged rights, and who yet form the nation. Deprived of every thing by law, they are still not so much degraded morally as they are socially. They have good mental capacity, and sometimes even elevation of character; but, nevertheless, the principle which chiefly actuates their conduct through life is cunning. No one has a right to reproach them with this too natural consequence of their situation. Ever on their guard against their masters, who are constantly acting towards them with open and shameless bad faith, they compensate themselves by artifice for what they suffer through injustice. The relations between the peasantry and the owner of the soil, as well as their less immediate relations with the country, that is to say, with the Emperor, would alone be a subject worthy of a long sojourn in the interior of Russia.

In many parts of the empire the peasants believe themselves to belong to the earth, a condition of existence which appears to them natural, even when they have difficulty in understanding how man can be the property of man. In many other countries the peasants believe that the earth belongs to them. Such are the most happy, if they are not the most submissive, of slaves. Not unfrequently the peasants, when about to be sold, send a deputation to some far off master, of whose character for kindness reports have reached them, imploring him to buy them, their lands, their children, and their cattle; and if this lord, thus celebrated for his gentleness, (I do not say his justice, for the sentiment of justice is unknown in Russia,)—if this desirable lord has no money, they

provide him with it, in order to be sure of belonging only to him. The benevolent lord, therefore, buys his new serfs with their own money; after which he exempts them from taxes for a certain number of years; thus indemnifying them for the price of their bodies, which they have paid to him in advance, by furnishing the sum that represents the value of the domain to which they belong, and of which they have, as it were, obliged him to become the proprietor.

The greatest misfortune which can happen to these vegetating men is to see their native fields sold. They are always sold with the glebe, and the only advantage they have hitherto derived from the modern ameliorations of the law, is, that they cannot now be sold without it. This provision is, however, notoriously evaded. Instead, for instance, of selling an entire estate, a few acres are often sold with one or two hundred men per acre. If the government becomes aware of such collusion it punishes the guilty parties, but it has seldom an opportunity of interfering; for between the crime and the supreme authority, that is, the Emperor, are a whole multitude of people interested in concealing and perpetuating abuses. The proprietors suffer as much as the serfs from this state of things, especially those whose affairs are deranged. Estates are difficult to sell; so difficult, that a man who owes debts and is willing to pay them, is finally obliged to have recourse to the Imperial Bank, where he borrows the sum which he requires, the Bank taking his property in mortgage. By this means the Emperor becomes treasurer and creditor of all the Russian nobility; and the latter, thus curbed by supreme power, are placed in a

situation which makes the fulfilment of their duties towards the people impossible.

On a certain day a nobleman declares his intention of selling an estate. The news of this project throws the country into alarm. The peasants send to their lord a deputation of the elders of their village, who throw themselves at his feet, imploring with tears that they may not be sold. "It must be," replies the lord: "I cannot conscientiously augment the tax which my peasants pay, and nevertheless I am not rich enough to keep an estate which scarcely brings me in any thing."

"Is that all?" cry the deputies; "we then are wealthy enough to enable you to keep us." Whereupon, of their own free will, they raise their rent to double the amount which they have paid from time immemorial." Other peasants, with less gentleness, and greater craft of character, revolt against their masters, solely with the hope of becoming serfs of the crown. This is the highest ambition of the Russian peasant.

To emancipate suddenly such men would be to set the country on fire. The moment that the serfs, separated from the land to which they are attached, were to see it sold, let, or cultivated without them, they would rise in a mass, crying that they were despoiled of their goods.

It is but a short time ago that, in a remote village which was on fire, the peasants, who complained of the tyranny of their master, availed themselves of the disorder they had perhaps caused purposely, to seize his person, impale it, and roast it in the flames of the conflagration. For such acts the Emperor

usually orders the transportation of the entire village to Siberia. This is called in Petersburg *peopling Asia.*

When I reflect upon these, and a thousand other cruelties, which, with greater or less secrecy, take place daily in the bosom of this immense empire, where the distances equally favour oppression and revolt, I am ready to conceive a hatred against the land, the government, and the entire population: an indefinable sense of uneasiness takes possession of me, and I think only of flying.

The fortune of a wealthy man is here computed by the heads of peasants. The man who is not free is coined; he is equivalent (on an average) to ten roubles a year to his proprietor, who is called free because he is the owner of serfs. There are districts where each peasant brings three and four times this sum to his master. In Russia the human money alters in value, as, with us, the land, which doubles in price when markets can be opened for its produce. Here I involuntarily pass my time in calculating how many families it has taken to pay for a bonnet, a shawl, or a rose tree: nothing appears to me as it does elsewhere; every thing seems tainted with blood. The number of human beings condemned to suffer, even unto death, in order to furnish the requisite quantity of stuff which forms the dress of some lovely woman at court, occupies my thoughts more than all her finery or her beauty. Absorbed in the labour of this melancholy computation, I feel myself growing unjust. The most charming face reminds me, in spite of my efforts to banish such ideas, of those caricatures of Bonaparte which were spread all over Europe

in 1815. At a little distance the colossal statue of the Emperor appeared a simple likeness, but, on inspecting it more nearly, each feature was found to be composed of mutilated corpses.

In all countries the poor work for the rich, who pay them for their labour; but these poor are not folded for life in some enclosure like mere herds of cattle; and, though obliged to toil at the labour which daily provides their children with bread, they at least enjoy a semblance of liberty; now semblance, or appearance, is almost every thing to a being whose views are limited, but whose imagination is boundless. With us the hireling has the right of changing his employers, his residence, and even his profession, but the Russian serf is a chattel of his lord's; enlisted from birth to death in the service, his life represents to this proprietor a part and parcel of the sum necessary to supply the caprices and fantasies of fashion. Assuredly, in a state thus constituted, luxury is no longer innocent. All communities in which a middle class of society does not exist, ought to proscribe luxury as a scandal, for in well-organised lands, it is the profits which this class draws from the vanity of the superior classes which produce general opulence. If, as is anticipated, Russia should become a land of industrial arts, the relations between the serf and the owner of the soil will be modified, and a population of independent dealers and artisans will rise up between the nobles and the peasants, but at present the commerce of the land is scarcely born; the manufacturers, merchants, and tradesmen, are almost all Germans.

It is here only too easy to be deceived by the ap-

pearances of civilisation. If you look to the court and the people who are its votaries, you may suppose yourself among a nation far advanced in social culture and in political economy; but when you reflect on the relations which exist between the different classes of society, when you observe how small the number of these classes — finally, when you examine attentively the groundwork of manners and of things — you perceive the existence of a real barbarism, scarcely disguised under a magnificence which is revolting.

I do not reproach the Russians for being what they are, what I blame in them is, their pretending to be what we are. They are still uncultivated: this state would at least allow room for hope; but I see them incessantly occupied with the desire of mimicking other nations, and this they do after the true manner of monkeys, caricaturing what they copy. They thus appear to me spoilt for the savage state, and yet wanting in the requisites of civilisation; and the terrible words of Voltaire or of Diderot, now forgotten in France, recur to my mind — "The Russians have rotted before they have ripened."

At Petersburg every thing has an air of opulence, grandeur, and magnificence; but if we should by this show of things judge of the reality we should find ourselves strangely deceived. Generally, the first effect of civilisation is to render what may be called, *material* life easy; but here every thing is difficult: — a cunning apathy is the secret of existence.

If you wish to ascertain precisely what is to be seen in this great city, and if Schnitzler does not

satisfy you, you will find no other guide *: no bookseller has on sale a complete directory to the curiosities of Petersburg: either the well informed men whom you question have an interest in not answering you, or they have something else to do. The Emperor, his health, his movements, the project with which he is ostensibly occupied, such are the only subjects worthy of the thoughts of a Russian who thinks at all. The catechism of the court is the only necessary knowledge. All take pleasure in rendering themselves agreeable to their master, by hiding some corner of truth from the eyes of travellers. No one has any idea of gratifying the curious; on the contrary, they love to deceive them by false data: it requires the talents of a great critic to travel to advantage in Russia. Under despotism, curiosity is synonymous with indiscretion. The empire is the emperor.

And yet this frightful extent of greatness was not sufficient for the Czar Peter. That man, not content with being the reason of his people, would also become their conscience. The sovereign who did not shrink before such a responsibility, and who, notwithstanding his long apparent, or real hesitation, finally rendered himself culpable of so enormous an usurpation, has inflicted more evil on the world by this single outrage against the prerogatives of the priests, and the religious liberty of man, than he has conferred benefit on Russia by all his warlike and political talents, and his genius for the arts of industry. This emperor, type and model of the empire, and of

* Schnitzler is author of the best work on Russian statistics that has been written.

the emperors in all ages, was a singular union of the great and the minute. With a lust of power grasping as that of the most cruel tyrants of any age or nation, he united the ingenuity of the artisan in a degree that made him the rival of the best mechanics of his times; a sovereign scrupulously terrible, an eagle and an ant, a lion and a beaver: — this monarch, dreadful during life, now imposes himself on posterity as a species of saint, and tyrannises over the judgments, as he formerly tyrannised over the acts of men. To pass an impartial opinion upon him is at the present time a sacrilege which is not without danger, even for a stranger, in Russia. I brave this danger every moment of the day, for of all yokes, the most insupportable to me is that which imposes the necessity of admiring.* In Russia, power, all unlimited as it is, entertains an extreme dread of censure, or even of free speech. An oppressor is of all others the man who most fears the truth; he only escapes ridicule by the terror and mystery with which he environs himself. Hence it is that there must be no speaking of persons here: one must not allude to the *maladies* of which the Emperors Peter III. and Paul I. died, any more than to

* In the *History of Russia and of Peter the Great*, by M. le Général Comte de Ségur, we read as follows, (the Strelitz are the parties referred to): — "Peter himself interrogated these criminals by the torture, after which, in imitation of Ivan the Tyrant, he acted as their judge and their executioner. . . . Drunk with wine and blood, the glass in one hand, the axe in the other, in one single hour twenty successive libations marked the fall of twenty heads of the Strelitz, which the emperor struck off, piquing himself all the while on his horrible address."

the clandestine amours that certain malevolent persons have ascribed to the reigning emperor. The amusements of this prince are viewed only as relaxations from the cares of greatness. This once known, and with whatever consequences they may be attended to certain families, one must profess ignorance of them under pain of being accused of the greatest of all crimes in the eyes of a people composed of slaves and diplomatists—the crime of indiscretion.

I am impatient to see the Empress. She is said to be a charming, though at the same time a frivolous and haughty personage. It needs both hauteur and levity to support an existence like that of hers. She neither interferes with nor informs herself respecting any public affairs: knowledge is worse than useless, where there is no power to act upon it. The Empress does as the other subjects of the Emperor: all who are born Russians, or would live in Russia, must make silence upon public affairs the motto of their life. Secret conversations would be very interesting, but who dares indulge in them? To reflect, and to discern would be to render one's self suspected.

M. de Repnin governed the empire and the Emperor: he has been out of favour for *two years*, and for *two years* Russia has not heard his name pronounced, though that name was previously in every body's mouth. In one day he fell from the pinnacle of power into the lowest depth of obscurity. No one dared to remember that he was living, nor even to believe that he ever had lived. In Russia, on the day that a minister falls from favour, his friends become deaf and blind. A man is as it were buried

the moment he appears to be disgraced. Russia does not know to-day if the minister who governed her yesterday exists. Under Louis the XV. the banishment of M. de Choiseul was a triumph; in Russia the retirement of M. de Repnin is a funeral.

To whom will the people one day appeal, from the mute servility of the great? What explosion of vengeance is not the conduct of this cringing aristocracy preparing against the autocratic power? What are the duties of the Russian noblesse? To adore the Emperor, and to render themselves accomplices in the abuse of sovereign power, that they themselves may continue to oppress the people. Is such the position that Providence has ordained them to occupy in the economy of this vast empire? They fill its posts of honour. What have they done to merit them? In the history of Russia, no one except the Emperor has performed his part. The nobles, the clergy, and all the other classes of society, have each failed in their own. An oppressed people have always deserved the ills under which they suffer. Tyranny is the work of the nation. Either the civilised world will, before another fifty years, pass anew under the yoke of barbarians, or Russia will undergo a revolution more terrible than that, the effects of which we are still feeling in Western Europe.

I can perceive that I am feared here, which I attribute to its being known that I write under the influence of my convictions. No stranger can set foot in this country without immediately feeling that he is weighed and judged. "This is a sincere man," they think, "therefore he must be dangerous."

Under the government of the lawyers* a sincere man is only useless!

"An indefinite hatred of despotism reigns in France," they say, "but it is exaggerated and unenlightened, therefore we will brave it. The day, however, that a traveller, who convinces because he himself believes, shall tell the real abuses, which he cannot fail to discover among us, we shall be seen as we really are. France now barks at us without knowing us; when she does know us, she will bite."

The Russians, no doubt, do me too great honour by this inquietude; which, notwithstanding their profound dissimulation, they cannot conceal from me. I do not know whether I shall publish what I think of their country; but I do know that they only do themselves justice in fearing the truths that I could publish.

The Russians have every thing in name, and nothing in reality. They have civilisation, society, literature, the drama, the arts and sciences — but they have no physicians. In case of illness you must either prescribe for yourself, or call in a foreign practitioner. If you send for the nearest doctor you are a dead man, for medical art in Russia is in its infancy. With the exception of the physician of the Emperor, who, I am told, is, though a Russian, learned, the only doctors who would not assassinate you are the Germans attached to the service of the princes. But the princes live in a state of perpetual motion. It is often impossible to ascertain where they may be; or, when that is known, to send

* Alluding to France. — *Trans.*

twenty, forty, or sixty versts (two French leagues are equal to seven versts) after them. There are, therefore, practically speaking, no physicians in Russia. Should even the physician be sought at the known residence of his prince, and not be found there, there is no further hope. "The doctor is not here." No other answer can be obtained. In Russia every thing serves to show that reserve is the favourite virtue of the land. An opportunity for appearing discreet cannot but offer to those who know how to seize it, and what Russian would not do himself credit at so little cost? The projects and the movements of the great, and of those attached to their persons by so confidential an employ as that of physician, ought not to be known, unless officially declared, to persons who are born courtiers, and with whom obedience is a passion. Here mystery supplies the place of merit.

The most able of these doctors of the princes are far inferior to the least known among the medical men of our hospitals. The skill of the most learned practitioners will rust at court: nothing can supply the place of the experience gained by the bedside of the sick. I could read the secret memoirs of a Russian court physician with great interest, but I would not follow his prescriptions. Such men would make better chroniclers than doctors. When, therefore, a stranger falls sick among this *soi-disant* civilised people, his best plan is to consider himself among savages, and to leave every thing to nature.

On returning to my hotel this evening I found a letter, which has very agreeably surprised me. Through the influence of our ambassador, I am to

be admitted to-morrow to the imperial chapel, to see the marriage of the Grand Duchess.

To appear at court before having been presented, is contrary to all the laws of etiquette, and I was far from hoping for such a favour. The Emperor has, however, granted it. Count Woronzoff, Grand Master of the Ceremonies, without pre-informing me, for he did not wish to amuse me with a false hope, had despatched a courier to Peterhoff, which is ten leagues from Petersburg, to solicit his Majesty in my favour. This kind consideration has not been unavailing. The Emperor has given permission for me to be present at the marriage, in the chapel of the court, and I am to be presented, without ceremony, at the ball on the same evening.

CHAP. XI.

COINCIDENCE OF DATES. — MARRIAGE OF THE GRANDSON OF M. DE BEAUHARNAIS. — CHAPEL OF THE COURT. — THE EMPEROR NICHOLAS. — HIS PERSON. — THE EMPRESS. — CONSEQUENCES OF DESPOTISM. — THE AUTHOR'S DÉBUT AT COURT. — AN ACCIDENT. — MAGNIFICENT DECORATIONS AND COSTUME. — ENTRÉE OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY. — THE EMPEROR MASTER OF THE CEREMONIES. — FORMS OF THE GREEK CHURCH. — M. DE PAHLEN. — EMOTION OF THE EMPRESS. — DESCRIPTION OF THE DUKE OF LEUCHTENBERG. — HIS IMPATIENCE. — PRUDERY IN MODERN CONVERSATION. — ITS CAUSE. — MUSIC OF THE IMPERIAL CHAPEL. — THE ARCHBISHOP. — THE EMPEROR KISSES HIS HAND. — TALISMAN OF M. DE BEAUHARNAIS. — NO CROWD IN RUSSIA. — IMMENSITY OF THE PUBLIC SQUARES. — THE COLUMN OF ALEXANDER. — FALSE TASTE OF THE RUSSIANS IN THE ARTS. — TRIUMPHAL ARCH. — STORM AT THE MOMENT OF THE MARRIAGE. — THE EMPEROR TO BE PITIED. — THE EMPRESS A VICTIM. — THE AUTHOR'S PRESENTATION. — THE EMPEROR'S VOICE. — THE AFFABILITY OF THE EMPRESS. — A FÊTE AT THE PALACE. — COURTIERS. — COURT DANCES. — THE POLONAISE. — THE GRAND GALLERY. — POLITICAL REFLECTIONS. — FRENCH POLITICS. — THE SUPPER. — KHAN OF THE KIRGUISES. — THE QUEEN OF GEORGIA. — RUSSIAN COURT DRESS. — THE GENEVESE AT THE EMPEROR'S TABLE. — POLITENESS OF THE MONARCH. — A NIGHT SCENE IN THE NORTH. — AN UNEXPECTED INTERVIEW WITH THE EMPRESS. — PHILOSOPHY OF DESPOTISM.

I AM writing on the 14th of July, 1839, fifty years after the taking of the Bastille, which event occurred on the 14th of July, 1789. The coincidence of these dates is curious. The marriage of the son of Eugene de Beauharnais has taken place on the same day as that which marked the commencement of our revolutions, precisely fifty years ago.

I have just returned from the palace, after having witnessed, in the Imperial chapel, all the Greek ceremonies of the marriage of the Grand Duchess Marie with the Duke de Leuchtenberg.

I will endeavour to describe in detail, but in the first place I must speak of the Emperor.

The predominant expression of his countenance is that of a restless severity, which strikes a beholder at the first glance; and, in spite of the regularity of his features, conveys by no means a pleasant impression. Physiognomists pretend, with much reason, that the hardness of the heart injures the beauty of the countenance. Nevertheless, this expression in the Emperor Nicholas appears to be the result of experience rather than the work of nature. By what long and cruel sufferings must not a man have been tortured, when his countenance excites fear, notwithstanding the voluntary confidence that noble features inspire.

A man charged with the management and direction, in its most minute details, of some immense machine, incessantly fears the derangement of one or other of its various parts. He who obeys suffers only according to the precise measure of the evil inflicted: he who commands, suffers first as other men suffer, and afterwards that common measure of evil is multiplied a hundred fold for him by the workings of imagination and self-love. Responsibility is the punishment of absolute power.

If he be the *primum mobile* of all minds, he becomes the centre also of all griefs: the more he is dreaded the more he is to be pitied.

He to whom is accorded unlimited rule sees, even in

the common occurrences of life, the spectre of revolt. Persuaded that his rights are sacred, he recognises no bounds to them but those of his own intelligence and will, and he is, therefore, subject to constant annoyance. An unlucky fly, buzzing in the Imperial palace during a ceremony, mortifies the Emperor: the independence of nature appears to him a bad example: every thing which he cannot subject to his arbitrary laws becomes in his eyes as a soldier, who in the heat of battle revolts against his officer. The Emperor of Russia is a military chief, and every day with him is a day of battle.

Nevertheless, at times, some gleams of softness temper the imperious looks of this monarch, and then the expression of affability reveals all the native beauty of his classic features. In the heart of the husband and the father, humanity triumphs for a moment over the policy of the prince. When the sovereign rests from his task of imposing the yoke upon his subjects, he appears happy. This combat between the primitive dignity of the man and the affected gravity of the sovereign appears to me worthy the attention of an observer: it occupied mine the greater part of the time I passed in the chapel.

The Emperor is above the usual height by half a head; his figure is noble, although a little stiff: he has practised from his youth the Russian custom of girding the body above the loins to such a degree as to push up the stomach into the chest, which produces an unnatural swelling or extension about the ribs, that is as injurious to the health as it is ungraceful in appearance.

This voluntary deformity destroys all freedom of movement, impairs the elegance of the shape, and imparts an air of constraint to the whole person. They say that when the Emperor loosens his dress, the viscera, suddenly giving way, are disturbed for a moment in their equilibrium, which produces an extraordinary prostration of strength. The bowels may be displaced — they cannot be got rid of.

The Emperor has a Grecian profile — the forehead high, but receding; the nose straight, and perfectly formed; the mouth very finely cut; the face, which in shape is rather a long oval, is noble; the whole air military, and rather German than Slavonic. His carriage and his attitudes are naturally imposing. He expects always to be gazed at, and never for a moment forgets that he is so. It may even be said that he likes this homage of the eyes.

He passes the greater part of his existence in the open air, at reviews, or in rapid journeys. During summer the shade of his military hat draws across his forehead an oblique line, which marks the action of the sun upon the skin. This line produces a singular effect, but it is not disagreeable, as the cause is at once perceived.

In examining attentively the fine person of this individual on whose will hangs the fate of so many others, I have remarked with involuntary pity that he cannot smile at the same time with the eyes and the mouth, a want of harmony which denotes perpetual constraint; and which makes one remember with regret that easy natural grace, so conspicuous in the less regular but more agreeable countenance of his brother, the Emperor Alexander. The latter, always

pleasing, had yet, at times, an assumed manner. The Emperor Nicholas is more sincere; but he has an habitual expression of severity, which sometimes gives the idea of harshness and inflexibility. If, however, he is less fascinating, he is more firm than his late brother: but then it must be added, that he has also a proportionately greater need of firmness. Graceful courtesy insures authority, by removing the desire of resistance. This judicious economy in the exercise of power is a secret of which the Emperor Nicholas is ignorant; he is one who desires to be obeyed, where others desire to be loved.

The figure of the Empress is very elegant; and, though she is extremely thin, I find an indefinable grace about her whole person. Her mien, far from being haughty, as I had been informed, is expressive of an habitual resignation. On entering the chapel she was much affected, and I thought she was going to faint. A nervous convulsion agitated every feature of her face, and caused her head slightly to shake. Her soft blue, but rather sunken eyes, told of deep sufferings supported with angelic calmness. Her look, full of feeling, has the more power, from its seeming unconscious of possessing any. Faded before her time, and so weak, that it is said she cannot live long, her appearance gives the idea of a passing shadow, or of something that belongs no more to earth. She has never recovered from the anguish she had to undergo on the day of her accession to the throne, and conjugal duty has consumed the rest of her life.

She has given too many idols to Russia, — too many children to the Emperor. "Exhausting herself

in Grand Dukes! What a destiny!" said a great Polish lady, who did not think herself obliged to speak reverently with her lips of what she hated in her heart.

Every one sees the state of the Empress, but no one mentions it. The Emperor loves her: when ill in bed he attends her himself, watches by her bed-side, and prepares and administers her food or medicine. No sooner is she better, than he destroys her health with the excitement of fêtes and journeys; but the moment that danger is again apprehended, he renounces all his projects. Of the precautions that might prevent evil he has a horror. Wife, children, servants, relations, favorites, — all in Russia must follow in the imperial vortex, and smile on till they die. All must force themselves to conform to the wish of the sovereign, which wish alone forms the destiny of all. The nearer any one is placed to the imperial sun, the more he is a slave to the glory attached to his situation. The Empress is dying under the weight of this slavery.

Every one here knows this, but no one speaks of it; for it is a general rule never to utter a word which can excite much interest: neither he who speaks, nor he who listens, must allow it to be seen that the subject of conversation merits continued attention, or awakens any warm feelings. All the resources of language are exhausted, in order to banish from discourse idea and sentiment, without, however, appearing to repress them, which would be *gauche*. The excessive constraint which results from this prodigious labour, — prodigious especially through the art with which it is concealed, — embitters the life of the Russians.

Such a torment serves as an expiation for the men who voluntarily deprive themselves of the two greatest gifts of God — mind, and its organ, speech; in other words, thought and liberty.

The more I see of Russia, the more I approve the conduct of the Emperor in forbidding his subjects to travel, and in rendering access to his own country difficult to foreigners. The political system of Russia could not survive twenty years' free communication with the west of Europe. Listen not to the fictions of the Russians: they mistake pomp for elegance, luxury for politeness, a powerful police, and a dread of government, for the fundamental principles of society. According to their notions discipline is civilisation. Notwithstanding all their pretensions to good manners, their superficial education, their precocious corruption, and their facility of comprehending and appropriating the materialism of life, the Russians are not yet civilised. They are enrolled and drilled Tartars, and nothing more.

I wish it not to be inferred that they are therefore to be despised: the more their mental rudeness is concealed under the softer forms of social intercourse, the more formidable I consider them. As regards civilisation, they have been hitherto contented with exhibiting its appearance; but if ever they should find an opportunity of revenging their real inferiority upon us, we shall have to make a tremendous expiation for our advantages.

This morning, after dressing myself in haste, in order to repair to the imperial chapel, I entered my carriage, and followed that of the French ambassador, through the squares and streets that led to the palace,

examining with curiosity all that presented itself in the way. The troops which I observed in the approaches to the palace were less magnificent than I had been led to expect, though the horses were certainly superb. The immense square which separates the dwelling of the sovereign from the rest of the city, was crossed in various directions by lines of carriages, servants in livery, and soldiers in a variety of uniforms. That of the cossacks is the most remarkable. Notwithstanding the concourse, the square, so vast is its extent, was not crowded.

In new states there is a void every where; but this is more especially the case when the government is absolute: it is the absence of liberty which creates solitude, and spreads sadness.

The equipages of the courtiers looked well, without being really elegant. The carriages, badly painted, and still more badly varnished, are of a heavy make. They are drawn by four horses, whose traces are immoderately long. A coachman drives the wheel horses; a little postillion, clothed in the long Persian robe similar to that of the coachman, rides on a fore horse, seated upon, or rather in, a hollow saddle, raised before and behind, and stuffed like a pillow. This child, named, I believe, after the German the Vorreiter*, and in Russia the *Faleiter*, is always perched upon the right, or off-side leader; the contrary custom prevails in all other countries, where the postillion is mounted on the left, in order to have the right hand free to guide his other horse. The spirit and power of the Russian horses, which have all

* The fore rider.

some blood, if all have not beauty, the dexterity of the coachmen, and the richness of their dress, greatly set off the carriages, and produce altgether an effect which, if not so elegant, is more striking and splendid than that of the equipages of the other courts of Europe.

I was occupied with a crowd of reflections which the novelty of the objects around me suggested, when my carriage stopped under a grand peristyle, where I descended among a crowd of gilded courtiers, who were attended by vassals as barbaric in appearance as in reality. The costume of the servants is almost as brilliant as that of their masters. The Russians have a great taste for splendour, and in court ceremonies this taste is more especially displayed.

In descending from the carriage rather hastily, lest I should be separated from the persons under whose guidance I had placed myself, my foot struck with some force against the curb stone, which had caught my spur. At the moment I paid little attention to the circumstance; but great was my distress when immediately afterwards I perceived that the spur had come off, and, what was still worse, that it had carried with it the heel of the boot also. Having to appear in this dilapidated state, for the first time, before a man said to be as precise as he is great and powerful, seemed to me a real misfortune. The Russians are prone to ridicule; and the idea of affording them a subject for laughter at my first presentation was peculiarly unpleasant.

What was to be done? To return under the peristyle to search for the remnant of my boot was quite useless. To quit the French ambassador and

return home would, in itself, be the way to create a *scene.* On the other hand, to show myself as I was, would ruin me in the estimation of the Emperor and his courtiers; and I have no philosophy against ridicule to which I voluntarily expose myself. The troubles that pleasure draws one into at a thousand leagues from home, appear to me insupportable. It was so easy not to go at all, that to go awkwardly were unpardonable. I might hope to conceal myself in the crowd; but, I repeat, there never is a crowd in Russia; and least of all upon a staircase like that of the new winter palace, which resembles some decoration in the opera of Gustavus. This palace is, I believe, the largest and most magnificent of all existing royal or imperial residences.

I felt my natural timidity increase with the confusion which this ludicrous accident produced; until, at length, fear itself supplied me with courage, and I began to limp as lightly as I could across the immense saloons and stately galleries, the length and strong light of which I inwardly cursed. The Russians are cool, quick-sighted quizzes, possessing, like all the ambitious, little delicacy of feeling. They are, besides, mistrustful of strangers, whose judgment they fear, because they believe we have but little good feeling towards them. This prejudice renders them censorious and secretly caustic, although outwardly they appear hospitable and polite.

I reached, at length, but not without difficulty, the further end of the imperial chapel. There all was forgotten, even myself and my foolish embarrassment; indeed, in this place the crowd was more dense, and no one could see what was wanting to my equipment.

The novelty of the spectacle that awaited me restored my coolness and self-possession. I blushed for the vexation which my vanity as a disconcerted courtier had produced, and with the resumption of my part as simple traveller in the scene, recovered the composure of a philosophic observer.

One word more upon my costume. It had been the subject of grave consultation: some of the young people attached to the French legation had advised the habit of the national guard. I feared, however, that this uniform would displease the Emperor, and decided upon that of a staff officer, with the epaulettes of a lieutenant-colonel, which are those of my rank.

I had been warned that the dress would appear new, and that it would become, on the part of the princes of the imperial family, and of the emperor himself, the subject of numerous questions which might embarrass me. Hitherto, however, none have had time to occupy themselves with so small an affair.

The Greek marriage rites are long and imposing. Every thing is symbolical in the Eastern church. It seemed to me that the splendours of religion shed a lustre over the solemnities of the court.

The walls and the roof of the chapel, the habiliments of the priests and of their attendants, all glittered with gold and jewels. There are riches enough here to astonish the least poetical imagination. The spectacle vies with the most fanciful description in the Arabian Nights; it is like the poetry of Lalla Rookh, or the Marvellous Lamp, — that Oriental poetry in which sensation prevails over sentiment and thought.

The imperial chapel is not of large dimensions. It was filled with the representatives of all the sovereigns of Europe, and almost of Asia; by strangers like myself, admitted in the suite of the diplomatic corps; by the wives of the ambassadors, and by the great officers of the court. A balustrade separated us from the circular enclosure, within which the altar was raised. This altar is like a low square table. Places in the choir were reserved for the imperial family: at the moment of our arrival they were vacant.

I have seen few things that could compare with the magnificence and solemnity which attended the entrance of the Emperor into this chapel, blazing with gold and jewels. He appeared, advancing with the Empress, and followed by the court retinue. All eyes were immediately fixed upon him, and his family, among whom the betrothed pair shone conspicuously. A marriage of inclination celebrated in broidered habiliments, and in a place so pompous, was a novelty which crowned the interest of the scene. This was repeated by every one around me; for my own part I cannot give credit to the marvel, nor can I avoid seeing a politic motive in all that is said and done here. The Emperor perhaps deceives himself, and believes that he is performing acts of paternal tenderness, while in the bottom of his heart he may be secretly influenced in his choice by the hope of personal advantage.

It is with ambition as with avarice; misers always calculate, not excepting even the moment when they believe they are yielding to disinterested sentiments.

Although the court was numerous, and the chapel small, there was no confusion. I stood in the midst of the *corps diplomatique*, near the balustrade which separated us from the sanctuary. We were not so crowded, as to be unable to distinguish the features and movements of each of the personages, whom duty or curiosity had there brought together. No disorder interrupted the respectful silence that was maintained throughout the assembly. A brilliant sun illuminated the interior of the chapel, where the temperature had, I understood, risen to thirty degrees.* We observed in the suite of the Emperor, habited in a long robe of gold tissue, and a pointed bonnet, likewise adorned with gold embroidery, a Tartar Khan, who is half tributary, and half independent of Russia. This petty sovereign had come to pray the Emperor of all the Russians to admit among *his pages* a son, twelve years old, whom he had brought to Petersburg, hoping thus to secure for the child a suitable destiny. The presence of this declining power, served as a contrast to that of the successful monarch, and reminded me of the triumphal pomps of Rome.

The first ladies of the Russian court, and the wives of the ambassadors of the other courts, among whom I recognised Mademoiselle Sontag, now Countess de Rossi, graced with their presence the circumference of the chapel. At the lower end, which terminated in a brilliant, painted rotunda, were ranged the whole of the imperial family. The gilded ceiling, reflecting the ardent rays of the sun, formed a species of crown around the heads of the sovereigns and their children.

* Of Reaumur.—*Trans.*

The attire and diamonds of the ladies shone with a magic splendour in the midst of all the treasures of Asia, which beamed upon the walls of the sanctuary, where royal magnificence seemed to challenge the majesty of the God whom it honoured without forgetting its own.

All this gorgeous display is wonderful, especially to us, if we recall the time, not distant, when the marriage of the daughter of a Czar would have been scarcely heard of in Europe, and when Peter I. declared, that he had a right to leave his crown to whomsoever he pleased. How great a progress for so short a period!

When we reflect on the diplomatic and other conquests of this power, which not long since was considered as of but little importance in the civilised world, we are led to ask ourselves if that which we see is not a dream. The Emperor himself appeared to me not much accustomed to what was passing before him; for he was continually leaving his prayers, and slipping from one side to the other, in order to remedy the omissions of etiquette among his children, or the clergy. This proves, that in Russia, even the court has not yet finished its education. His son-in-law was not placed quite conveniently, whereupon he made him shift his position by about two feet. The Grand Duchess, the priests themselves, and all the great functionaries of the court seemed to be governed by his minute but supreme directions. I felt that it would have been more dignified to leave things as they were, and I could have wished that when once in the chapel, God only had been thought of, and each man had been left to acquit himself of his func-

tions, without his master so scrupulously rectifying each little fault of religious discipline, or of court ceremonial: but in this singular country the absence of liberty is seen every where: it is found even at the foot of the altar. Here the spirit of Peter the Great governs the minds of all.

During the mass at a Greek marriage, there is a moment when the betrothed drink together out of the same cup. Afterwards, accompanied by the officiating priest, they pass three times round the altar, hand in hand, to signify the conjugal union, and the fidelity which should attend their walk through life. All these acts are the more imposing, as they recall to mind the customs of the primitive church.

These ceremonies being ended, a crown was next held for a considerable time over the head of each of the newly-married pair; the crown of the Grand Duchess, by her brother the hereditary Grand Duke, the position of which the Emperor himself (once more leaving his prayer desk) took care to adjust, with a mixture of good nature and of minute attention that would be difficult to describe.

The crown of the Duke of Leuchtenberg was held by the Count de Pahlen, Russian ambassador at Paris, and son of the too celebrated and too zealous friend of Alexander. This recollection banished from the conversation, and perhaps from the thoughts, of the Russians of these days, did not cease to occupy my mind the whole time that the Count de Pahlen, with the noble simplicity which is natural to him, was engaged in the performance of an act envied, doubtless, by all who aspired to court favour. That act was an invocation of the protection of heaven,

upon the head of the husband of Paul the First's grandchild! The strange coincidence most probably occurred to no one except myself. It appears that tact and propriety are here necessary only for those who possess no power. Had the recollection of the fact which occupied my mind occurred to that of the Emperor, he would have commissioned some other individual to hold the crown over the head of his son-in-law. But in a country where they neither read nor speak of public affairs, nothing has less to do with the events of to-day, than the history of yesterday; power consequently sometimes acts inadvertently, and commits oversights which prove that it sleeps in a security not always well advised. Russian policy is not shackled in its march either by opinions or actions; the favour of the sovereign is every thing. So long as it lasts it supplies the want of merit, of virtue, and even of innocence in the man on whom it is lavished; and, in the same manner, when it is withdrawn, it deprives him of every thing.

Every one contemplated with a species of anxious interest the immovableness of the arms which sustained the two crowns. The scene lasted for a considerable time, and must have been very fatiguing for the performers. The young bride is extremely graceful; her eyes are blue, and her fair complexion has all the delicate freshness of early youth: openness and intelligence united form the predominant expression of her face. This princess and her sister, the Grand Duchess Olga, appear to me the two most beautiful persons at the Russian court: — happy unison of the advantages of rank and the gifts of nature.

When the officiating bishop presented the married pair to their august parents, the latter embraced them with a warmth that was affecting. The moment afterwards the Empress threw herself into the arms of her husband — an effusion of tenderness which would have better suited a chamber than a chapel: but in Russia the sovereigns are at home every where, not excepting the house of God. The tender emotion, however, of the Empress appeared altogether involuntary, and therefore did not shock the feelings. Woe to those who could find any thing to ridicule in the emotions produced by true and natural feeling! Such exhibitions of sensibility are sympathetic. German kindheartedness is never lost; there must indeed be soul when feeling is allowed to betray itself even upon the throne.

Before the benediction, two doves were, according to custom, let loose in the chapel; they quickly settled on a gilded cornice which jutted out directly over the heads of the wedded pair; and there they never ceased billing and cooing during the whole mass. Pigeons are well off in Russia: they are revered as the sacred symbol of the Holy Ghost, and it is forbidden to kill them: fortunately the flavour of their flesh is not liked by the Russians.

The Duke de Leuchtenberg is a tall, well-made young man, but there is nothing *distingué* in his features. His eyes are handsome, but his mouth projects and is not well formed. His figure is good without being noble: a uniform becomes him, and supplies that want of grace that may be observed in his person. He looks more like a smart sub-lieutenant

than a prince. Not one relation on his side had come to St. Petersburg to assist at the ceremony.

During the mass he appeared singularly impatient to be alone with his wife; and the eyes of the whole assembly were directed, by a kind of spontaneous sympathy, towards the two pigeons perched above the altar.

I possess neither the cynicism nor the talent for description of St. Simon, nor yet the ingenious humour of the writers of the good old times; I must therefore here dispense with some details that might prove rather amusing to the reader. In the age of Louis XIV. they exercised a liberty of language, which was fostered by the certainty of there being no hearers, except those who all lived and spoke in the same manner: there was then plenty of society, but no public. In these times, there is a public, but no society. With our fathers, every narrator in his own circle could state facts without reference to consequences; in the present day, all classes being mixed, there is a lack of benevolence, and therefore of security. Freedom of expression would appear *mauvais ton* to people who have not all learnt their French from the same vocabulary. A certain degree of plebeian sensitiveness has insinuated itself into the language of the best society in France; the greater the number whom we address, the greater the necessity for assuming a grave and precise mode of speaking; a nation demands more respect than an intimate society, however refined that society may be. As regards decorum in language, a crowd is more precise than a court. Freedom of speech becomes in-

convenient in proportion to the number of listeners. Such are the reasons which deter me from relating that which, this morning in the Imperial Chapel, brought a smile on the face of more than one grave personage, and, perhaps, more than one virtuous lady. But I could not pass over quite silently an incident which singularly contrasted with the majesty of the scene, and the necessity for gravity imposed upon the spectators.

At one part of the Greek marriage ceremony every one is obliged to kneel. Before prostrating himself with the others, the Emperor cast around the assembly a searching, and by no means pleasing glance. It appeared as though he would assure himself that no one remained standing—a superfluous precaution: for though there were among the foreigners present both Catholics and Protestants, it never, I am certain, entered into the thoughts of one not to conform, externally, to all the ceremonies of the Greek church.*

* The fear of the emperor, is in some measure explained by an account sent me from Rome, in the month of January, 1843, by one of the most veracious individuals whom I know.

"The last day in December I was at the Church del Gesu; it was decorated in a magnificent manner, the organs were playing beautiful symphonies, and all the most distinguished people in Rome were present. Two chairs were placed on the left of the superb altar for the Grand Duchess Marie daughter of the Emperor of Russia, and her husband the Duke of Leuchtenberg. They arrived attended by their suite and the Swiss guards, who formed their escort, and seated themselves on their chairs without previously kneeling on the cushions opposite, or paying any attention to the holy sacrament exposed before their eyes. The ladies of honour sat behind, which obliged the prince and

The possibility of a doubt on such a point, justifies some of my previous observations, and authorises my repeating that a restless severity has become the habitual expression of the physiognomy of the Emperor.

In these times, when revolt pervades, as it were, the very air, perhaps autocracy itself begins to fear lest some insult should be offered to its power. This idea would clash disagreeably, and even terrifically, with the notions which it preserves of its rights. Absolute power is most to be feared when it is itself under the influence of fear. In noticing the nervous affection, the weakness, and the emaciated frame of the Empress, I called to mind what this interesting woman must have suffered during the revolt at the time of her accession to the throne. Heroism repays itself; it is by fortitude, but a fortitude that exhausts life.

I have already said that every body had fallen on their knees, and, last of all, the Emperor; the lovers were united; the imperial family and the crowd arose; the priests and choir chanted the *Te Deum*, and discharges of artillery, outside, announced the consecration of the marriage to the city. The effect

princess to turn their heads in order to carry on the conversation, which they continued to do as though they were in a saloon. Two chamberlains remained standing, whereupon a sacristan, supposing they wanted seats and busying himself to provide them, excited much unsuitable laughter on the part of the prince and princess. The Pope remained during the whole ceremony, which was a rendering of thanks to God for the blessings of the past year, upon his knees. A cardinal gave the benediction, when the Prince of Leuchtenberg knelt also, but the Princess continued seated."

of this exquisite music, mingled with the thunder of the cannon, the ringing of the bells, and the distant acclamations of the people, was inexpressibly grand. All musical instruments are banished from the Greek church, and the voices of human beings only there celebrate the praises of God. This rigour of the oriental ritual is favourable to the art of singing, preserving to it all its simplicity, and producing an effect in the chants which is absolutely celestial. I could fancy I heard the heart-beating of sixty millions of subjects — a living orchestre, following, without drowning, the triumphal hymn of the priests. I was deeply moved: music can make us forget for one moment even despotism itself.

I can only compare these choruses without accompaniment, to the *Miserere* as sung during the Passion Week in the Sixtine chapel at Rome; but the chapel of the Pope is but the shadow of what it formerly was. It is one ruin more amid the ruins of Rome. About the middle of the last century, when the Italian school shone in its brightest lustre, the old Greek chants were re-arranged, without being spoilt, by composers who were brought to Petersburg from Rome. The works of these strangers are *chefs-d'œuvre*, which is mainly owing to all their talent and science having been applied in subservience to the works of antiquity. Their classic compositions are executed with a power worthy of the conception. The soprano, or children's parts — for no woman sings in the imperial chapel — are perfectly correct; the basses have a strength, depth, and purity, that exceed any thing I recollect having heard elsewhere.

To an amateur of the art, the music of the imperial chapel is alone worth a journey to Petersburg. The sweet, the powerful, and all the finest shades of expression, are observed with a depth of feeling and a skill which cannot be too much admired. The Russians are musical; this cannot be doubted by those who have heard the music in their churches. I listened without daring to breathe, and I longed for my learned friend Meyerbeer to explain to me the beauties which I so deeply felt, but which I was unable to comprehend. He would have understood them by the inspiration they would have communicated, for his admiration of models is expressed by his rivalling them.

During the Te Deum, at the moment when the two choirs were responding to each other, the tabernacle opened, and the priests were seen, their heads adorned with sparkling tiaras of jewels, and their bodies clothed in robes of gold, over which their silver beards fell majestically; some of these beards reach as far as the waist. The assistants make as dazzling an appearance as the priests. This court is certainly magnificent, and the military costume shines also in all its splendour. I saw with delight the people bringing to God the homage of their riches and their pomp. The sacred music was listened to by a profane auditory with a silence and attention, which would alone give an effect to chants less sublime than these. God was there, and his presence sanctifies even the court: the world and sense were nothing more than accessory objects — the reigning thought was heaven.

The officiating archbishop did not disgrace the

majesty of the scene. If not handsome, he is venerable; his small figure is like that of a weasel, but his head is white with age. He has a care-worn and sickly appearance; a priest, old and feeble, cannot be an ignoble object. At the close of the ceremony, the Emperor came and bent before him, respectfully kissing his hand.

The autocrat never fails to give an example of submission, when there is a hope that this example may be of profit to himself. I was interested in the poor archbishop, who appeared dying in the midst of his glory. The majestic figure of the Emperor, and his noble countenance, bending before the representative of religious power — the youthful couple — the imperial family — the spectators — in short, the whole assemblage that filled and animated the chapel, formed a subject for a picture. Before the ceremony, I thought the archbishop would have fainted. The court kept him waiting a long time, unmindful of the saying of Louis XVIII., that "Punctuality is the politeness of kings." Notwithstanding the cunning expression of his countenance, this old man inspired me with compassion. He was so feeble, and yet he sustained fatigue with so much patience, that I pitied, if I did not respect him; for whether his patience was the result of piety, or of ambition, it was cruelly tried.

As to the person of the young Duke of Leuchtenberg, it was in vain that I endeavoured to reconcile myself to it; it did not please me better at the close of the ceremony than at the beginning. This young man has a fine military bearing, and that is all. He reminded me of what I knew before, namely, that,

in our days, princes are more common than gentlemen. I should have said that the Emperor's guard would have been a more suitable place for the young duke than the Emperor's family. His countenance manifested no emotion at any of the ceremonies which appeared so touching to me — an indifferent spectator. I was carried there by mere curiosity, and yet I felt very deeply affected, whilst the son-in-law of the emperor, the hero of the scene, seemed uninterested with regard to all that passed around him. He has a vacant countenance, and appeared more taken up with his person than with what he was doing. It can be seen that he reckons but little upon the good will of a court, where interested calculation prevails more completely than in any other, and where his unexpected fortune may procure him more enemies than friends. This young prince has, nevertheless, a slight resemblance to his father, whose countenance was intelligent and kind. Notwithstanding the tight Russian uniform, in which every one must feel fettered and confined, it appeared to me that his step was light, like that of a Frenchman. He little thought when passing before me, that there was one near him who carried on his breast a relic so precious to both, but more particularly so to the son of Eugene Beauharnais. I allude to the Arabic talisman, that M. de Beauharnais, the father of the viceroy of Italy, and the grandfather of the Duke of Leuchtenberg, gave to my mother as he passed the chamber which she inhabited in the Carmelite convent, on his way to the scaffold.

The religious ceremony in the Greek chapel was followed by a second nuptial benediction by a Ca-

tholic priest, which took place in one of the halls of the palace, consecrated to this pious use for the day only. After these two marriages, the bride and bridegroom and their family met at table. I, not having permission to witness either the Catholic marriage or the banquet, followed the greater number of the courtly crowd, and went out to breathe a less stifling air, congratulating myself on the little effect that my dilapidated boot had produced. Some persons, however, spoke to me of it laughingly, and that was all. Both in good and in evil, nothing that merely regards ourselves is as important as we fancy it.

On departing from the palace I found my carriage again without any trouble. There is never, I repeat, a large concourse in Russia. The space is always too vast for what is done there. This is the advantage of a country where there is no nation. In a community thus ordered, a crowd would be equivalent to a revolution.

The void which is every where observable, causes the public structures to appear too small for the places in which they stand; they seem lost in space. The column of Alexander passes for being higher than that of the Place Vendôme, owing to the dimensions of its pedestal. The shaft consists of one single block of granite, the largest that has ever been shaped by the hand of man. This immense column, raised between the winter palace and the crescent, which forms the other extremity of the square, when viewed from the palace, appears to the eye as nothing more than a pole, and the houses around might be taken for palisades. In the square a hundred thousand men

can perform their manœuvres, without its appearing filled or thickly peopled. It is enclosed by the winter palace, the façades of which are rebuilt on the model of the old palace of the Empress Elizabeth. Here is at least a relief to the eyes, after the poor and frigid imitations of the monuments of Athens and Rome. The style is that of the Regency, or Louis XIV. degenerated, but the scale is very large. The opposite side of the square is terminated by a semicircle or crescent of buildings, in which are established the bureaus of various ministers of state. These edifices are mostly constructed in the ancient Grecian style. Singular taste! Temples erected to clerks! The buildings of the Admiralty are in the same square. Their small pillars and gilded turrets produce a picturesque effect. An avenue of trees ornaments the square opposite this spot, and renders it less monotonous. On the other side of the immense Russian Champ de Mars stands the church of Saint Isaac, with its colossal peristyle, and its brazen dome, still half concealed by the scaffolding of the architect. Further on is seen the palace of the senate, and other structures still in the form of pagan temples. Beyond, in an angle of this long square, at its extremity on the Neva, stands the statue of Peter the Great, which disappears in immensity like a pebble on the shore. These above-named edifices contain material enough to build an entire city, and yet they do not complete the sides of the great square of Petersburg: it is a plain, not of wheat, but of pillars. The Russians may do their best to imitate all that art has produced of beautiful in other times and other lands; they forget that nature is stronger than man. They never

sufficiently consult her, and therefore she is constantly revenging herself by doing them mischief. Masterpieces have only been produced by men who have listened to, and felt the power of, nature. Nature is the conception of God; art is the relation between the conceptions of man and those of the power which has created, and which perpetuates the world. The artist repeats on earth what he has heard in heaven; he is but the translator of the works of the Deity; those who would create by their own models produce only monsters.

Among the ancients the architects reared their structures in steep and confined spots, where the picturesque character of the site added to the effect of the works of man. The Russians, who flatter themselves they are reproducing the wonders of antiquity, and who, in reality, are only caricaturing them, raise their *soi-disant* Grecian and Roman structures in immense fields, where they are almost lost to the eye. The architecture proper for such a land would not be the colonnade of the Parthenon, but the tower of Pekin. It is for man to build mountains, when nature has not undulated the surface of the earth; but the Russians have raised their porticoes and pediments without thinking of this, and without recollecting that on a flat and naked expanse it is difficult to distinguish edifices with so small an elevation. We still recognise the steppes of Asia in cities where they have pretended to revive the Roman Forum.* Muscovy is more nearly allied to Asia

* These observations apply only to the buildings constructed from the time of Peter I. The Russians of the middle ages, who built the Kremlin, better understood the architecture which belonged to their land and their genius.

than to Europe. The genius of the East hovers over Russia. The semicircle of edifices opposite the imperial palace, if observed sideways, at a proper distance, has the effect of an incomplete ancient amphitheatre. If examined more nearly, we see only a series of decorations that have to be replastered every year, in order to repair the ravages of the winter. The ancients built with indestructible materials under a favourable sky; here, under a climate which destroys everything, they raise palaces of wood, houses of plank, and temples of plaster; and, consequently, the Russian workmen pass their lives in rebuilding, during the summer, what the winter has demolished. Nothing resists the effects of this climate; even the edifices that appear the most ancient have been reconstructed but yesterday; stone lasts here no better than lime and mortar elsewhere. That enormous piece of granite, which forms the shaft of the column of Alexander, is already worn by the frost. In Petersburg it is necessary to use bronze in order to support granite; yet notwithstanding these warnings, they never tire of imitating the taste of southern lands. They people the solitudes of the pole with statues and historical bas-reliefs, without considering that in their country monuments are even more evanescent than memories. Petersburg is but the scaffolding of a structure — when the structure is finished, the scaffolding will be removed. This chef-d'œuvre, not of architecture but of policy, is the New Byzantium, which, in the deep and secret aspirations of the Russian, is to be the future capital of Russia and the world.

Facing the palace, an immense arcade pierces the

already noticed semicircular range of buildings, and leads into the *Morskoë* street. Above this enormous vault is placed a car with six horses in bronze, guided by, I know not what kind of allegorical or historical figure. I doubt whether there could be elsewhere seen anything in such bad taste as this colossal gate opening under a house, and flanked on either side by ordinary dwellings, whose vicinity has nevertheless not prevented its being, under Russian architects, converted into a triumphal arch. I question the merit of the workmanship of the car, statue, and horses; but were they ever so good, they are so ill placed that I should not admire them. In objects of art it is the harmony and keeping of the whole which invite to the examination of details; without merit in the conception, what avails a delicacy in the execution? But, indeed, both one and the other are equally wanting in the productions of Russian art. Hitherto this art has been confined to imitating, without choice or taste, the good or the evil of other lands. If the design be entertained of reviving ancient architecture, it can only be done by strictly copying, and by placing such copies in analogous sites. Every thing here is mean, although colossal; for in architecture it is not the dimensions of the walls which constitute excellence, but the purity of the style.

I cannot cease marvelling at the passion they have conceived here for light, aerial structures. In a climate where there is sometimes a difference of eighty degrees between the temperature of winter and of summer, what have the inhabitants to do with porticoes, arcades, colonnades, and peristyles? But the

Russians are accustomed to view even nature as a slave. Obstinate imitators, they mistake their vanity for genius, and believe themselves destined to renew, on a scale yet larger than the original, all the wonders of the world. Such creations of the Russian sovereigns, as I have hitherto seen, have evinced, not the love of the arts, but the love only of self.

Among other boasts, I hear it said by many Russians, that their climate also is ameliorating! Will God, then, connive at the ambition of this grasping people? Will he give them up even the sky and the breeze of the south? Shall we see Athens in Lapland, Rome at Moscow, the riches of the Thames in the Gulf of Finland, and the history of nations reduced to a question of latitude and longitude?

While my carriage, after leaving the palace, was crossing rapidly the immense square I have been describing, a violent wind raised immense clouds of dust, and I could only see, as through a veil, the equipages that were passing in all directions. The dust of summer is one of the plagues of Petersburg; it is so troublesome that I even wish for the winter snow. I had scarcely reached my hotel when a tremendous storm burst forth. Darkness at mid-day, thunder without rain, a wind which blew down houses, and, at the same time, a suffocating temperature, were the greeting which Heaven gave during the nuptial banquet. The superstitious viewed these signs as ominous, but soon became re-assured, by observing that the storm did not last long, and that the air was purer after it than before. I recount what I see, without sympathising with it, for I have

no interest here but that which actuates a curious and attentive stranger. There is between France and Russia a Chinese wall — the Slavonic language and character. In spite of the notions with which Peter the Great has inspired the Russians, Siberia commences on the Vistula.

Yesterday at seven o'clock I returned to the palace with several other foreigners, in order to be presented to the emperor and empress.

It is easy to perceive that the former cannot for a single instant forget what he is, nor the constant attention which he excites; he studies attitude incessantly, — from whence it results that he is never natural, not even when he is sincere. He has three expressions, not one of which is that of simple benevolence. The most habitual appears to be that of severity. Another, though rarer expression, suits perhaps better his fine face — it is that of solemnity; a third is that of politeness, in which are mixed some shades of gentleness and grace, that serve to temper the chill produced by the two former. But notwithstanding this grace, there is still something which injures the moral influence of the man; it is, that each expression is assumed or cast off at will, without the least trace of one remaining to modify the one next adopted. For such change we are not prepared, and it therefore appears like a mask, that can be put on or off at pleasure. Let not my meaning of the word mask be misunderstood, — I employ it according to its strict etymology. In Greek, *hypocrite* means an actor: the hypocrite was a man who masked himself to perform a play. I would only say, then, that the emperor is always engaged in acting his part.

Hypocrite or actor are ill-sounding words, especially in the mouth of one who professes to be impartial and respectful. But it appears to me that, to intelligent readers, and it is only such that I address, words are nothing in themselves; their importance depends upon the sense that is given to them. I do not say that the physiognomy of this prince lacks candour, but it lacks natural expression. Thus, the chief evil under which Russia suffers, the absence of liberty, is depicted even on the countenance of its sovereign: he has many masks, but no face. Seek for the man, and you still always find the emperor.

I believe this remark may be turned to his praise; he acts his part conscientiously. He would accuse himself of weakness were he to be for a single moment plain and simple, or were he to allow it to be seen that he lived, thought, and felt as do common mortals. Without seeming to partake of any of our affections, he is always governor, judge, general, admiral, prince, — never anything more, — never anything less. He will surely grow weary of all this effort as he advances in life; yet it will place him high in the opinion of his people, and perhaps of the world, for the multitude admire the efforts which astonish them, — they pride themselves in seeing the pains that are taken to dazzle them.

Those who knew the Emperor Alexander, eulogise that prince on entirely different grounds. The qualities and the faults of the two brothers were altogether opposite; there was no resemblance, and likewise no sympathy between them. In this country, the memory of a defunct emperor is little honoured, and in the present instance inclination accords with the policy

that would always have the preceding reign forgotten. Peter the Great is more nearly resembled by Nicholas than by Alexander, and he is more the fashion at the present day. If the ancestors of the emperors are flattered, their immediate predecessors are invariably calumniated.

The present emperor never lays aside the air of supreme majesty except in his family intercourse. It is there only that he recollects that the natural man has pleasures independent of the duties of state; at least, I hope that it is this disinterested sentiment which attaches him to his domestic circle. His private virtues no doubt aid him in his public capacity, by securing for him the esteem of the world; but I believe he would practise them independently of this calculation.

Among the Russians, sovereign power is respected as is a religion the obligations and authority of which stand independently of the personal merit of its priests: the virtues of the prince being superfluous, are so much the more sincere.

If I lived at Petersburg I should become a courtier, not from any love of place or power, nor from any puerile vanity, but from the desire of discovering some road that might reach the heart of a man who differs from all others. Insensibility is not in him a natural vice, it is the inevitable result of a position which he has not chosen, and which he cannot quit.

To abdicate a disputed power would be sometimes a revenge, to abdicate an absolute power would be an act of cowardice.

The singular destiny of an Emperor of Russia inspires me, first, with a lively emotion of curiosity,

and afterwards with a feeling of pity. Who would not commiserate the state of this glorious exile? I cannot tell whether the Emperor Nicholas has received from God a heart susceptible of friendship, but I feel as though the desire of testifying a disinterested attachment to a man to whom society refuses equals, might take the place of ambition. The danger even, would give to such zeal the charm of enthusiasm. What! it will be said, attachment for a man who has nothing of humanity about him; whose severe physiognomy inspires a respect always mingled with fear, whose firm and fixed looks, in excluding familiarity, command obedience, and whose mouth, when it smiles, does not harmonise with the expression of the eyes; attachment for a man, in short, who never for a moment forgets to play his part as an absolute monarch!

And wherefore not? This want of harmony, this apparent harshness, is not a crime but a misfortune. I view in it a forced habit, not a natural character; and believing that, I can see into this man whom you calumniate as much by your fears and your precautions as your flatteries, I can feel all that it must cost him to perform his duty as a sovereign, and I would not abandon so pitiable a deity of earth to the implacable envy and the hypocritical submission of his slaves. To find again the neighbour in the prince, to love him as a brother, would be a religious vocation, and a work of charity that would gain the blessing of heaven.

The more we see of the court, more especially of the court of Russia, the greater compassion must we feel for him who has to preside over it. It is a theatre, on whose boards the actors pass their life in

rehearsals. No one knows his part, and the day for the representation never arrives, because the manager is never satisfied with the proficiency of his *corps*. Actors and managers thus pass their life in preparing, correcting and perfecting their interminable drama of society, the title of which is "The civilisation of the North." If it be so fatiguing to the audience, what must it be to the performers!

The emperor is, by extraction, more a German than a Russ. The fineness of his features, the regularity of his profile, his military figure, his bearing, naturally a little stiff, all remind one of Germany rather than of Muscovy. His Teutonic temperament must have been long schooled and fettered ere he could have become, as he now is, a thorough Russian. Who knows? — he was perhaps born a plain good-natured man! If so, what must he not have endured before he could appear only as the chieftain of the Slavonians? The obligation of achieving a continual victory over himself in order to reign over others, will explain much in the character of the Emperor Nicholas.

Far from inspiring me with dislike, these things attract me. I cannot help viewing with interest one feared by the rest of the world, and who is, in reality, only so much the more to be commiserated.

To escape as much as possible from the constraint which he imposes on himself, he is as restless as a lion in a cage, or a patient in a fever; he is constantly moving on foot or on horseback; reviewing, carrying on little wars, sailing, manœuvring his fleet, giving and receiving fêtes. Leisure is that which is most dreaded at this court; whence I conclude that

no where else is ennui so much felt. The emperor travels incessantly; he journeys over at least 1500 leagues every season, and he has no notion that others have not the strength to do as he does. The empress loves him, and dreads leaving him; she therefore follows him as well as she can, and is dying of the fatigues and excitement consequent upon this life.

So complete an absence of quiet and regularity must be injurious to the education of their children. The young princes do not live sufficiently isolated to avoid the evil influences which the frivolity of a court always in motion, the absence of all interesting and connective conversation, and the impossibility of meditation, must exert upon their character. When I think of the distribution of their time, I have little hope even of the talents which they exhibit, I fear just as I would for the enduring beauty of a flower whose roots were not in their natural soil. Every thing is founded on appearance in Russia; whence it is that everything inspires mistrust.

I was presented this evening, not by the French ambassador, but by the grand master of the court ceremonies. Such was the order of the emperor, of which I was previously informed by our ambassador. I cannot tell whether this is the usual proceeding, but it was the manner in which I was presented to their imperial majesties.

All the foreigners admitted to the honour of approaching their persons, were assembled together in one of the saloons which they would have to cross in proceeding to open the ball. We arrived at the

appointed hour, and had to wait a long time for the appearance of the illustrious personages.

There were with me two or three French, a Pole, a Genevese, and several Germans. The opposite side of the saloon was occupied by a row of Russian ladies, assembled there to pay their court.

The Emperor received us with a refined and graceful politeness. At the first glance it was easy to recognise a man who, notwithstanding his power, is obliged and accustomed to humour the self-love of others.

In order to intimate to me that I might, without displeasing him, survey his empire, his majesty did me the honour of saying that it was at least necessary to see Moscow and Nijni before a just idea of the country could be formed. "Petersburg is Russian," he added, "but it is not Russia."

These few words were pronounced in a tone of voice that could not be forgotten, so strongly was it marked by authoritativeness and firmness. Every body had spoken to me of the imposing manners, the noble features, and the commanding figure of the emperor, but no one had prepared me for the power of his voice: it is that of a man born to command. In it there is neither effort nor study, it is a gift developed only by habitual use.

The Empress, on a near approach, has a most winning expression of countenance, and the sound of her voice is as sweetly penetrating as that of the emperor is naturally imperious.

She asked me if I came to Petersburg with the simple object of travelling. I replied in the affirm-

ative. "I know that you are a curious observer," she continued.

"Yes Madame," I answered, "it is curiosity which brings me to Russia; and this time, at least, I do not regret having yielded to a passion for travel."

"You really think so?" she replied with a gracefulness of manner that was very charming.

"It appears to me that there are such wonderful objects in this country, that to believe them requires that we should see them with the eyes."

"I should wish you to see much and to view favourably."

"This wish of your majesty's is an encouragement."

"If you think well of us, you will say so, but it will be useless; you will not be believed: we are ill understood, and people will not understand us better."

These words in the mouth of the Empress struck me, on account of the pre-occupation of idea which they discovered. It seemed to me also that she meant to manifest a kind of benevolence towards me, which was expressed with a politeness and a simplicity that are rarely seen.

The Empress, the moment she speaks, inspires confidence as well as respect. Through the reserve which the language and usages of court render compulsory, it is easy to see that she has a heart. This misfortune imparts to her an indefinable charm. She is more than an empress, she is a woman.

She appeared to be suffering from extreme fatigue. The thinness of her person is quite shocking. The agitation of the life she leads is consuming her, and

they say that the ennui of a life more calm would be equally injurious.

The fête which followed our presentation was one of the most magnificent that I have ever seen. The admiration and astonishment with which each saloon of this palace (rebuilt in a year), inspired the whole court, imparted a dramatic interest to the formal pomp of the usual ceremonies. Every hall and every painting was a subject of surprise to the Russians themselves, who now for the first time saw the marvellous abode which the word of their Deity had caused to spring from its ashes. What an effort of human will, thought I, as I contemplated each gallery, sculpture and painting. The style of the ornaments calls to mind the age in which the palace was originally founded, and what I saw appeared already ancient. They copy everything in Russia, not excepting even the effects of time. These wonders inspired the crowd with an admiration that was contagious, and my internal indignation at the means by which the miracle was created, began to diminish. If I could feel such an influence after only two days' abode here, what allowance should not be made for the men who are born, and who pass their life in the air of the Russian court!—that is in Russia; for it is the air of the court which is breathed from one end of the empire to the other. Even the serfs, through their relations with their lords, feel the influence of that sovereign will which alone animates the country: the courtier who is their master, is for them the image of the emperor, and the court is present to the Russians wherever there is a man to command, and men to obey.

Elsewhere the poor are either beggars, or unruly members of society; in Russia they are all courtiers. The courtier is found in every rank of society, and for this reason it is that I say, the court is everywhere. There is, between the sentiments of the Russian nobles and those of men of family in ancient Europe, the same difference that there is between the courtier and the aristocrat, or between emotions of vanity and of pride; — true pride, which is almost as rare as virtue — is virtue. Instead of abusing courtiers as Beaumarchais and so many others have done, these men, who, whatever may be said, are like other men, deserve pity. Poor unfortunate courtiers! they are not the monsters that our modern plays and romances, or our revolutionary journals describe; they are merely weak creatures, corrupted and corrupting, as much as, but not more than, others who are less exposed to temptation. Ennui is the curse of riches, still it is not a crime: vanity and interest are more strongly excited, and therefore more eagerly sought in a court than on any other stage of action: and these passions abridge life. But if the hearts they agitate are more tormented, they are not more perverse than those of other men. Human wisdom would accomplish much if it could succeed in showing to the multitude how much it ought to feel of pity instead of envy towards the possessors of a fancied good.

I saw them dancing in the very place where they had themselves nearly perished under blazing ruins, and where others had since actually died, in order that they might be amused on the day appointed by the emperor. This thought made me reflect in spite of myself, and shed (for me) a gloom over the entire

fête. Elsewhere liberty gives birth to a feeling of gladness which is favourable to illusion; here despotism suggests meditations which make it impossible to deceive one's self.

The kind of dance that is most common at the grand fêtes of this country, does not disturb the course of ideas. The company promenade in a solemn step to the sound of music, each gentleman taking his partner by the hand. In the palace, hundreds of couples thus follow in procession, proceeding from one immense hall to another, winding through the galleries crossing the saloons, and traversing the whole building in such order or direction as the caprice of the individual who leads, may dictate. This is called dancing *la Polonaise.* It is amusing at first, but for those destined to dance it all their lives, balls must, I think, be a species of torture.

The *Polonaise* at Petersburg recalled to my memory the congress of Vienna, where I had danced it in 1814. No etiquette was observed in the European fêtes celebrated on that occasion, every one's place in the dance was regulated by hazard, though in the midst of all the monarchs of the earth. My fate had placed me between the Emperor Alexander and his consort, who was a princess of Baden. All at once, the line of the dancing couples was stopped without our perceiving the reason, as the music continued playing. The emperor, growing impatient, put his head over my shoulder, and, addressing himself to the empress, told her in a very rude tone, to move on. The empress turned, and perceiving behind me the emperor, with a lady as his partner for whom he had for some days past manifested a violent passion,

she retorted, with an expression altogether indescribable, "Toujours poli!" The autocrat bit his lips as he caught my eye, and the line of dance again moved forward.

I was dazzled with the splendour of the great gallery; it is now entirely gilded, though before the fire it was only painted white. That disaster has served to minister to the taste which the emperor has for the magnificent.

All the ambassadors of Europe had been invited to admire the marvellous achievement of this government, a government which is so much the more bitterly criticised by the vulgar, as it is admired and envied by political men, — minds essentially practical, and who, approve the simplicity of the machine of despotism. One of the largest palaces in the world built in a year! what a subject of admiration for men accustomed to breathe the air of courts!

Great objects are never attained without great sacrifices. Unity, force, and authority in the direction of public affairs, are purchased here by the loss of liberty, while in France, political liberty and commercial wealth have been purchased at the cost of the ancient spirit of chivalry, and of that delicacy of feeling formerly called our national honour. This honour is replaced by other virtues less patriotic, but more universal — by humanity, religion and charity. Every one admits that in France there is more religion now than there was at a time when the clergy was all-powerful. A wish to embrace the advantages which do not belong to each situation, is to lose those which do belong to it. It is this which is not ad-

mitted in France, where we expose ourselves to the danger of destroying everything by our very wish to preserve everything. Each nation is governed by its own law of necessity, to which it must submit, under penalty of national ruin.

We want to be commercial like the English, free like the Americans, at liberty to follow our caprices like the Poles in the times of their diets, and conquerors like the Russians; all which is tantamount to being nothing. The good sense of a nation consists in perceiving and choosing the object that suits its genius, and is indicated by nature and history, and then, in shrinking from no sacrifices necessary to attain it.

France wants good sense in her ideas, and moderation in her desires. She is generous, she is even resigned*; but she does not know how to employ and direct her powers. She acts by impulse and at random. A country where, from the time of Fenelon, they have done nothing but talk of politics, is, in the present day, neither governed nor served. There are plenty of men who see and deplore the evil; but as for the remedy, every one seeks it in his passion, and therefore no one finds it, for the passions persuade those only who are under their influence.

Nevertheless, it is at Paris that one still leads the most pleasant life. We there amuse ourselves with every thing by finding fault; at Petersburg people weary of every thing in bestowing praise; pleasure, however, is not the end of existence, not even for individuals, and still less for nations.

* Elle est même résignée.

What appeared to me more splendid even than the ball-room in the winter palace, was the gallery in which supper was served. It is not entirely finished, and the lights in temporary paper transparencies had a fantastic appearance which did not displease me. So unexpected an illumination in honour of the marriage-day, did not certainly correspond with the general decorations of the magical palace, but it produced a light clear as that of the sun, and this was enough for me. Thanks to the progress of commercial economy, we no longer see in France anything but tapers; there seem to be yet in Russia real wax candles. The supper-table was splendid; in this fête every thing was colossal, every thing was also innumerable in its kind, and I scarcely knew which most to admire, the superb effect of the whole, or the magnificence and the quantity of the objects considered separately. A thousand persons were seated together at the table.

Among these thousand, all more or less blazing with gold and diamonds, was the Khan of the Kirguises, whom I had seen at the chapel in the morning. I remarked also an old Queen of Georgia, who had been dethroned thirty years previously. This poor woman languished, unhonoured, at the court of her conqueror. Her face was tanned like that of a man's used to the fatigues of the camp, and her attire was ridiculous. We are too ready to laugh at misfortune when it appears under a form that does not please us. We should wish to see a Queen of Georgia rendered more beautiful by her distress; but we here see just the contrary, and, when the eyes are displeased, the heart soon becomes unjust. This is

not generous, but I confess I could not help smiling to see a royal head crowned with a kind of shako, from whence hung a very singular veil. All the other ladies wore trains; but the queen of the East had on a short embroidered petticoat. There was much of the worn-out and wearied courtier in her expression, and her features were ugly. The national dress of the Russian ladies at court is antique and striking. They wear on the head a kind of tower, formed of rich stuff, and something resembling in shape the crown of a man's hat, lowered in height, and open at the top. This species of diadem is generally embroidered with jewels: it is very ancient, and gives an air of nobleness and originality to handsome persons, while it singularly enhances the ugliness of plain ones. Unfortunately, these last are very numerous at the Russian court, from whence people seldom retire, except to die, so attached are the aged people to the posts they there occupy. In general, female beauty is rare at Petersburgh; but among the higher classes the charm of graceful manners often supplies the place of elegant forms and regular features. There are, however, a few Georgian women who unite the two advantages. These females shine amid the women of the north, like stars in the profound darkness of a southern night. The shape of the court robes, with their long sleeves and trains, gives to the whole person an oriental aspect which, in a large assembly thus robed, has a very imposing effect.

An incident, singular enough in its character, has afforded me a specimen of the perfect politeness of the emperor.

During the ball, a master of the ceremonies had indicated to such of the foreigners as appeared for the first time at this court, the places that were reserved for them at the supper-table. "When you see the ball interrupted," he said to each of us, "follow the crowd into the gallery, where you will find a large table laid out; take the side to the right, and seat yourselves in the first places you find unoccupied."

There was but one table, laid with one thousand covers, for the *corps diplomatique*, the foreigners, and all the attendants at court; but at the entrance of the hall, on the right hand side, was a little round table laid for eight.

A Genevese, an intelligent and well-educated young man, had been presented the same evening in the uniform of a national guard, a dress which is in general anything but agreeable to the emperor; nevertheless, this young Swiss appeared perfectly at home. Whether it was owing to natural assurance, republican ease, or pure simplicity of heart, he seemed neither to think of the persons around him, nor of the effect that he might produce upon them. I envied his perfect self-confidence, which I was far from participating. Our manners, though very different, had the same success; the emperor treated us both equally well.

An experienced and intelligent person had recommended to me, in a tone half serious, half jocose, to maintain a respectful and rather timid air if I wished to please the monarch. This counsel was quite superfluous, for if I were to enter the hut of a collier, in order to make his acquaintance, I should experience

some little degree of physical embarrassment, so naturally do I shrink from society. A man has never German blood without showing it; I possessed, therefore, naturally, the degree of timidity and reserve requisite to satisfy the jealous majesty of the Czar, who would be as great as he wishes to appear, if he were less prepossessed with the notion that those who approach him are likely to fail in respect. This inquietude of the emperor does not, however, always operate; of which, and of the natural dignity of that prince, the following is an instance.

The Genevese, far from partaking of my old-fashioned modesty, was perfectly at his ease. He is young, and has about him all the spirit of the age mingled with a simplicity of his own; and I could not but admire his air of assurance each time the emperor addressed him.

The affability of the monarch was soon put by the young Swiss to a decisive proof. On passing into the banquet hall, the republican, turning towards the right, according to the instruction he had received, came across the little round table, and intrepidly seated himself before it, though there was no other person there to keep him company. The moment after, the crowd of guests being placed, the emperor, followed by some officers who enjoyed his special confidence, advanced and took his seat at the same table at which was placed the worthy Swiss national guardsman. I should state that the empress was not at this table. The traveller remained in his chair with the imperturbable ease which I had already so much admired in him, and which, under the circumstances, was really admirable.

A seat was wanting, for the emperor had not expected this ninth guest; but, with a politeness the completeness of which was equivalent to the delicacy of a kind heart, he spoke in a low voice to a servant, directing him to bring a chair and another cover, which was done without any noise or trouble.

Being placed at the extremity of the great table, close to that of the emperor, this occurrence could not escape my observation, nor, consequently, that of him who was its object. But, this happily-constituted young man, far from troubling himself because he perceived he had been placed contrary to the intention of the sovereign, maintained, with the most perfect *sang froid*, a conversation with his two nearest neighbours, which lasted during the whole repast. I thought to myself, he has good sense; he does not wish to make a public display: but, no doubt, he only waits the moment when the emperor rises, to approach him, and to offer some word of explanation. Nothing of the kind! When supper was over the young Swiss, far from excusing himself, seemed to view the honour he had received as nothing more than was quite natural. On returning to his lodging he would doubtless inscribe, with the most perfect simplicity, in his journal — "Supped with the emperor." However, his majesty rather abridged the pleasure: rising, before the guests who sat at the great table, he passed round behind our chairs, all the while desiring that we should remain seated. The Hereditary Grand-duke accompanied his father; I observed this young prince stop behind the chair of a great English nobleman, the Marquis ——, and exchange some jest with the young Lord ——, son of

the same marquis. The foreigners remained seated, like every body else, before the prince and the emperor, answered them with their backs turned, and continued eating.

This exhibition of English politeness shows that the Emperor of Russia has greater plainness of manners than have many of the owners of private houses.

I had scarcely expected to find at this ball a pleasure altogether foreign to the persons and objects around. I allude to the impressions which the great phenomena of nature have always produced in me. The temperature of the day had risen to 50 degrees, and notwithstanding the freshness of the evening, the atmosphere of the palace during the fête was suffocating. On rising from table I took refuge in the embrasure of an open window. There, completely abstracted from all that passed around, I was suddenly struck with admiration at beholding one of those effects of light which we see only in the north, during the magic brightness of a polar night. It was half-past twelve o'clock, and the nights having yet scarcely begun to lengthen; the dawn of day appeared already in the direction of Archangel. The wind had fallen: numerous belts of black and motionless clouds divided the firmament into zones, each of which was irradiated with a light so brilliant, that it appeared like a polished plate of silver; its lustre was reflected on the Neva, to whose vast and unrippled surface it gave the appearance of a lake of milk or of mother-of-pearl. The greater part of Petersburg, with its quays and its spires, was, under this light, revealed before my eyes; it was a perfect

composition of Breughel's. The tints of the picture cannot be described by words. The domes of the church of Saint Nicholas stood in the relief of lapis lazuli against a sky of silver; the illuminated portico of the Exchange, whose lamps were partially quenched by the dawning day, still gleamed on the water of the river, and was reflected — a peristyle of gold: the rest of the city was of that blue which we see in the distances of the landscapes of the old painters. This fantastic picture, painted on a ground of ultramarine, and framed by a gilded window, contrasted, in a manner that was altogether supernatural, with the light and splendour of the interior of the palace. It might have been said that the city, the sky, the sea and the whole face of nature had joined in contributing to the magnificence of the fête given to his daughter by the sovereign of these immense regions.

I was absorbed in the contemplation of the scene, when a sweet and penetrating female voice suddenly aroused me with the question — "What are you doing here?"

"Madame, I am indulging in admiration. I can do nothing else to-day."

It was the empress. She stood alone with me in the embrasure of the window, which was like a pavilion opening on the Neva.

"As for me, I am suffocating," replied her majesty. "It is less poetical, I admit; but you are right in admiring this picture; it is magnificent!" Continuing to contemplate it, she added—"I am certain that you and I are the only persons here who have remarked this effect of light."

"Every thing that I see is new to me, Madame; and I can never cease to regret that I did not come to Russia in my youth."

"The heart and the imagination are always young."

I ventured no answer; for the empress, as well as myself, had no longer any other youth but that of which she spake — of which fact I did not wish to remind her; she would not have given me the time, nor, indeed, should I have had the boldness to tell her how many indemnifications may be found to console us for the flight of years. On retiring she said, with a grace which is her distinguishing attribute — "I shall recollect having suffered and admired with you:" and she afterwards added, "I do not leave yet; we shall meet again this evening."

I am very intimate with a Polish family, which is that of the woman whom the empress loves best — the Baroness ——. This lady was brought up in Prussia with the daughter of the king, has followed that princess to Russia, and has never quitted her. She has married in Petersburg, where she has no other office but that of friend to the empress. Such constancy is honourable to both. The baroness must have been speaking well of me to the emperor and empress, and my natural timidity — a flattery so much the more refined as it is involuntary — has completed my good fortune.

On leaving the supper saloon, to pass into the ball room, I again approached a window. It opened into the interior court of the palace. A spectacle was there presented to me very different, but quite as unexpected as the former. The grand court of the winter palace is square, like that of the Louvre. During

the ball, this enclosure had been gradually filling with people. The light of the dawning day had become more distinct; and in looking on the multitude, mute with admiration, motionless, fascinated as it were by the splendours of its master's palace, and drinking in, with a sort of timid animal delight, the emanations of the royal festival, I experienced an impression of pleasure. At last, then, I had found a crowd in Russia: I saw nothing below me but men; and so close was the press that not an inch of earth could be discovered. Nevertheless, in despotic lands, the diversions of the people, when they approach those of the prince, always appear to me suspicious. The fear and flattery of the low, and the pride and hypocritical generosity of the great, are the only sentiments which I can believe to be genuine among men who live under the régime of the Russian autocracy.

In the midst of the fêtes of Petersburg I cannot forget the journey of the Empress Catherine into the Crimea, and the façades of villages, made of planks or painted canvass, and set up in the distance at every quarter league of the route, in order to make the triumphant sovereign believe that the desert had become peopled under her reign. A spirit similar to that which dictated these illusions still possesses the minds of the Russians; every one masks the evil, and obtrudes the good in the eyes of his imperial master. There is a permanent conspiracy of smiles, plotting against the truth, in favour of the mental satisfaction of him who is reputed to will and to act for the good of all. The emperor is the only man in the empire who lives; for eating and drinking is not living.

It must be owned, however, that the people remained there voluntarily; nothing appeared to compel them to come under the windows of the emperor: they were amusing themselves, therefore, but it was only with the pleasures of their masters; and, as Froissart says, *very sorrily*. The head-dress of the women, and the Russian, that is to say, the Persian, costume of the men, in their long robes and brightly-coloured girdles, the variety of colours and the immovableness of each individual, created the illusion of an immense Turkey carpet, spread entirely over the court by the magician who presides here over every miracle:—a parterre of heads,—such was the most striking ornament of the palace of the emperor during the night of his daughter's nuptials. This prince thought as I did, for he pointed out to the foreigners, with much complacency, the silent crowd, whose presence alone testified its participation in the happiness of its master. It was the vision of a people on their knees before the invisible gods. Their majesties are the divinities of this Elysium, where the inhabitants, trained to resignation, invent for themselves a felicity made up of privation and sacrifices.

I begin to perceive that I am here talking like the radicals in Paris. But, though a democrat in Russia, I am not the less in France an obstinate aristocrat: it is because a peasant in the environs of Paris is freer than a Russian lord, that I thus feel and write. We must travel before we can learn the extent to which the human heart is influenced by optical effects. This experience confirms the observation of

Madame de Staël, who said, that in France "every body is either Jacobin or ultra-something."

I returned to my lodgings overwhelmed with the grandeur and magnificence of the emperor, and yet more astonished at seeing the disinterested admiration of his people for the good things which they do not possess, nor ever will, and which they do not dare even to regret. If I did not daily see to how many ambitious egotists liberty gives birth, I should have difficulty in believing that despotism could make so many disinterested philosophers.

CHAP. XII.

NOTE. — EXCITEMENT OF A PETERSBURG LIFE. — THE EMPEROR TRULY A RUSSIAN. — AFFABILITY OF THE EMPRESS. — COMPARISON BETWEEN PARIS AND PETERSBURG. — DEFINITION OF POLITENESS. — FÊTE AT THE MICHAEL PALACE. — CONVERSATION WITH THE GRAND DUCHESS HELENA. — BEAUTIFUL ILLUMINATION. — A GROVE IN A BALL-ROOM. — JET D'EAU. — FUTURE PROSPECTS OF DEMOCRACY. — INTERESTING CONVERSATION WITH THE EMPEROR. — RUSSIA EXPLAINED. — IMPROVEMENTS IN THE KREMLIN. — AN ENGLISH NOBLEMAN AND HIS FAMILY. — ENGLISH POLITENESS. — ANECDOTE IN NOTE. — THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR. — THE GRAND CHAMBERLAIN. — SEVERE REPRIMAND OF THE EMPEROR'S.

NOTE.

The following chapter was forwarded, in the shape of a letter, from Petersburg to Paris, by a person whom I could depend upon; and the friend to whom it was addressed has preserved it for me, as some of the details appeared to him curious. If its tone seem more eulogistic than that of those I have kept myself, it is because too great a sincerity might, under certain circumstances, have compromised the obliging party who had offered to take charge of my despatch. In this chapter, therefore, and only in this; I felt obliged to magnify the good, and to extenuate the evil. This is a confession: but the least disguise would be a fault in a work, the value of which depends upon the scrupulous fidelity of the writer.

I wish therefore that this chapter be read with rather more caution than the others; and especially that the notes which serve to correct it may not be passed over.

One ought to be a Russian, or even the Emperor himself, to bear the fatigue of a life at Petersburg.

In the evening there are fêtes, such as are only seen in Russia; in the morning, court ceremonies and receptions, public solemnities, or reviews upon sea or land. A vessel of 120 guns has just been launched on the Neva before the whole court; but, though the largest vessel that the river has ever borne, it must not be supposed that there was any crowd at this naval spectacle. Space is that which the Russians least want, and through which they most suffer. The four or five hundred thousand men who inhabit Petersburg without peopling it, are lost in the vast enclosure of the immense city, the heart of which is composed of granite and brass, the body of plaster and of mortar, and the extremities of painted wood and rotten planks. These planks are raised in a solitary marsh like walls around the city, which resembles a colossal statue with feet of clay.*. It is like none of the other capitals of the civilised world, even though in its construction all have been copied; but man in vain seeks for models in distant lands: the soil and the climate are his masters, they oblige him to create novelties, when he desires only to revive the antique.

I was present at the Congress of Vienna, but I do not recollect seeing any thing to be compared to the richness of the jewels and dresses, the gorgeous variety of the uniforms, or the grandeur and admirable ordering of the whole spectacle, in the fête given by the emperor, on the evening of the marriage of

* The quays of the Neva are composed of granite, the cupola of Saint Isaac of copper, the Winter Palace and the column of Alexander of fine stone, marble and granite, and the statue of Peter I. of brass.

his daughter, in this same winter palace — burnt down only a year ago.

Peter the Great is not dead! His moral strength lives, and operates still. Nicholas is the only Russian sovereign which Russia has had since the reign of the founder of its metropolis.

Towards the end of the soirée given at court to celebrate the nuptials of the Grand Duchess Marie, the empress sent some officers to look for me, who, after searching for a quarter of an hour, could not find me. I was standing apart, according to my frequent practice, still absorbed in contemplating the beauty of the heavens, and admiring the night, against the same window where the empress had left me. Since supper I had quitted this place only for an instant, to follow in the train of their majesties; but not having been observed I returned into the gallery, where I could contemplate at leisure the romantic spectacle of the sun rising over a great city during a court ball. The officers at length discovered [redacted] in my hiding-place, and hastened to lead me t[redacted] empress, who was waiting for me. She ha[redacted] goodness to say before all the court, "M. d[redacted] tine, I have been inquiring for you for a long ti[redacted] why did you avoid me?"

"Madame, I twice placed myself before Yo[redacted] Majesty, but you did not observe me."

"It was your own fault, for I have been seeking for you ever since I entered the ball-room. I wish you to see every thing here in detail, in order that you may carry from Russia an opinion which may rectify that of the foolish and the mischievously disposed."

"Madame, I am far from attributing to myself a power that could effect this; but if my impressions were communicable, France would imagine Russia to be Fairy-land."

"You must not judge by appearances, you must look deeply into things, for you possess every thing that can enable you to do this. Adieu! I only wished to say good evening — the heat fatigues me. Do not forget to inspect my new apartments; they have been remodelled according to a plan of the emperor's. I will give orders for you to be shown every thing." On withdrawing, she left me the object of general curiosity, and of the apparent good-will of the courtiers.

This court life is so new that it amuses me. It is like a journey in the olden times: I could imagine myself at Versailles a century ago. Politeness and magnificence are here natural. It will be seen by this how different Petersburg is from our Paris of the present day. At Paris there is luxury, riches and even elegance; but there is neither grandeur nor courtesy. Ever since the first revolution, we have dwelt in a conquered country, where the spoilers and the spoiled consort together as well as they are able. In order to be polite, it is necessary to have something to give. Politeness is the art of doing to others the honours of the advantages we possess, whether of our minds, our riches, our rank, our standing, or any other source of enjoyment. To be polite, is to know how to offer and to accept with grace; but when a person has nothing certain of his own, he cannot give any thing. In France at the present time nothing is exchanged through mutual

good will; every thing is snatched by means of interest, ambition, or fear. Conversation, even, becomes insipid, when the secret calculations of interest cease to animate it. Mind itself is only valued, when it can be turned to personal account.

A fixed security of position in society is the basis of courtesy in all its relations, and the source also of those sallies of wit that enliven conversation.

Scarcely had we rested from the fatigues of the court ball, when we had to attend, in the Michael Palace, another fête, given yesterday by the Grand Duchess Helena, sister-in-law of the emperor, wife of the Grand Duke Michael, and daughter of Prince Paul of Wirtemberg, who lives at Paris. She, is spoken of as one of the most distinguished personages in Europe, and her conversation is extremely interesting. I had the honour of being presented to her before the ball commenced, when she only addressed a word to me, but during the evening she gave me several opportunities of conversing with her.

The following is, as far as I recollect, the summary of what was said: —

"I hear that, in Paris and its neighbourhood, you move in a very agreeable circle of society."

"It is true, madame, the conversation of persons of mind is my greatest pleasure, but I was far from venturing to suppose that your Imperial Highness would have been acquainted with this circumstance."

"We know Paris, and we are aware that there are there some few who are conversant with things as they now are, and who at the same time do not forget the past. These are, I doubt not, your friends.

We admire, through their writings, several of the persons whom you see habitually, especially Madame Gay, and her daughter, Madame de Girardin."

"These ladies are very intellectual: I have the good fortune to be their friend."

"You possess in them friends of a superior character."

Nothing is so rare as to think ourselves obliged to feel modesty for others; it was however a sentiment which I, in a slight degree, experienced at this moment. It will be said, that of all modesty this costs the least in its manifestation. However much it may be ridiculed, it is not the less true, that I felt I should have wanted delicacy, had I endeavoured to excite for my friends an admiration, by which my own vanity might have profited. At Paris I should have said all that I thought; at Petersburg I was afraid of seeming to magnify myself, under the pretence of doing justice to others. The Grand Duchess persisted, saying, "We take great pleasure in reading the works of Madame Gay. What do you think of them?"

"My opinion is, madame, that we may find in them a description of the society of former days written by one who understands it."

"Why does not Madame de Girardin continue to write?"

"Madame de Girardin is a poetess, madame, and in a writer of poetry silence is the indication of labour."

"I hope that this is the cause of her silence; for, with her observing mind and poetical talent, it would

be a pity that she should confine herself to the production of mere ephemeral works." *

During this conversation, I made it a rule merely to listen and to reply; but I expected to hear the Grand Duchess pronounce other names which might flatter my patriotic pride, and put my friendly reserve to new trials.

These expectations were deceived. The Grand Duchess, who passes her life in a country where society is remarkable for its tact, undoubtedly knew better than myself what to speak of, and what to omit. Equally fearing the significance of my words, and of my silence, she did not utter another syllable on the subject of our cotemporary literature.

There are certain names, whose sound alone would disturb the tranquillity of mind and the uniformity of thought, despotically imposed upon all who will live at the Russian court.

I must now describe some of the magic fêtes at which I am present every evening. With us the balls are disfigured by the sombre attire of the men, whereas the varied and brilliant uniforms of the Russian officers give an extreme brilliancy to the saloons of Petersburg.

In Russia the magnificence of the women's apparel is found to accord with the gold of the military dress; and the male dancers have not the appearance of being the clerks of attorneys, or the shopmen of their partners' apothecaries.

The whole length of the garden front of the Michael Palace is ornamented by an Italian colon-

* The conversation is repeated word for word as it occurred.

nade. Yesterday they availed themselves of a temperature of twenty-six degrees to illuminate the spaces betwixt each pillar of this exterior gallery with clusters of small lamps, arranged in a manner that had a very original effect. The lamps were formed of paper in the shape of tulips, lyres, vases, &c. Their appearance was both tasteful and novel.

At each fête given by the Grand Duchess Helena, it is said that she invents something altogether new. Such a reputation must be troublesome, for it is difficult to maintain. This princess, so beautiful and intellectual, and so celebrated throughout Europe for the grace of her manners, and the charms of her conversation, struck me as being less natural and easy than the other females of the imperial family. Celebrity as a woman of wit, and high intellectual attainment, must be a heavy burden in a royal court. She is an elegant and distinguished-looking person, but has the air of suffering from weariness and lassitude. Perhaps she would have been happier had she possessed good sense, with less wit and mental acquirements, and had continued a German princess confined to the monotonous life of a petty sovereignty.

Her obligation of doing the honours of French literature at the court of the Emperor Nicholas, makes me afraid of the Grand Duchess Helena.

The light that proceeded from the groups of lamps was reflected in a picturesque manner upon the pillars of the palace, and among the trees of the garden. The latter was full of people. In the fêtes at Petersburg the people serve as an ornament, just as a collection of rare plants adorns a hot-house. Delightful sounds were heard in the distance, where

several orchestras were executing military symphonies, and responding to each other with a harmony that was admirable. The light reflected on the trees had a charming effect. Nothing is more fantastically beautiful than the golden verdure of foliage illuminated during a fine night.

The interior of the grand gallery in which they danced was arranged with a marvellous luxury. Fifteen hundred boxes of the rarest plants in flower formed a grove of fragrant verdure. At one of the extremities of the hall, amid thickets of exotic plants, a fountain threw up a column of fresh and sparkling water: its spray, illumined by the innumerable wax lights, shone like the dust of diamonds, and refreshed the air, always kept in agitation by the movement of the dance. It might have been supposed that these strange plants, including large palms and bananas, all of whose boxes were concealed under a carpet of mossy verdure, grew in their native earth, and that the groups of northern dancers had been transported by enchantment to the forests of the tropics. It was like a dream; there was not merely luxury in the scene, there was poetry. The brilliancy of the magic gallery was multiplied a hundred-fold by a greater profusion of enormous and richly gilded pier and other glasses than I had ever elsewhere seen. The windows ranged under the colonnade were left open on account of the excessive heat of the summer night. The hall was lofty, and extended the length of half the palace. The effect of all this magnificence may be better imagined than described. It seemed like the palace of the fairies: all ideas of limits disappeared, and nothing met the eye but space,

light, gold, flowers, reflection, illusion, and the giddy movement of the crowd, which crowd itself seemed multiplied to infinity. Every actor in the scene was equal to ten, so greatly did the mirrors aid the effect. I hav never seen any thing more beautiful than this crystal palace; but the ball was like other balls, and did not answer to the gorgeous decorations of the edifice. I was surprised that this nation of dancers did not devise something new to perform on the boards of a theatre so different from all others where people meet to dance and to fatigue themselves, under the pretext of enjoyment. I should like to have seen the quadrilles and the ballets of other theatres. It strikes me that in the middle ages, the gratifications of the imagination had a greater influence in the diversions of courts than they have at present. In the Michael Palace the only dances that I saw were the polonaises, the waltz, and the degenerated country dances called quadrilles in the Franco-Russian. Even the mazourkas danced at Petersburg are less lively and graceful than the real dances of Warsaw. Russian gravity cannot accommodate itself to the vivacity, the whim, and the *abandon* of the true Polish dances.

Under the perfumed groves of the ball-room the empress reposed herself at the conclusion of every polonaise. She found there a shelter from the heat of the illuminated garden, the air of which during this summer night was as stifling as that of the interior of the palace.

I found leisure during the fête to draw a comparison in my own mind between France and Russia, on a subject regarding which my observations were

not in favour of the former. Democracy cannot but be uncongenial to the ordering of a grand assembly. The one which I beheld in the Michael Palace was embellished with all the care and all the tokens of homage of which a sovereign could be the object. A queen is always indispensable to the maintenance of elegant pleasures. But the principles of equality have so many other advantages, that we may well sacrifice to them the luxuries of pleasure. It is this which we do in France with a disinterestedness that is meritorious; my only fear is lest our great grandchildren may have different views, when the time shall have arrived to enjoy the perfections prepared for them by their too generous ancestors. Who knows if these undeceived generations shall not say, when speaking of us, "Seduced by a sophistical eloquence, they became vague, unmeaning fanatics, and have entailed on us absolute misery?"

To return from the contemplation of the future which America is promising to Europe:—before the banquet, the empress, seated under her canopy of exotic verdure, made me a sign to approach her; and scarcely had I obeyed, when the emperor also came to the magic fountain, whose shower of diamonds was giving us both light and a freshened atmosphere. He took me by the hand, and led me some steps from the chair of his consort, where he was pleased to converse with me for more than a quarter of an hour on subjects of interest; for this prince does not, like many other princes, speak to you merely that it may be seen he does so.

He first said a few words on the admirable arrangements of the fête; and I remarked, in reply,

that in a life so active as his, I was astonished that he could find time for every thing, including even a participation in the pleasures of the crowd.

"Happily," he replied, "the machine of government is very simple in my country; for, with distances which render every thing difficult, if the form of government was complicated, the head of one man would not suffice for its requirements."

I was surprised and flattered by this tone of frankness. The emperor, who understands better than any one that which is felt, though not expressed, proceeded — replying to my thought — "If I speak to you in this manner, it is because I know that you can understand me: we are continuing the labours of Peter the Great."

"He is not dead, sire; his genius and his will still govern Russia."

When any one speaks in public with the emperor, a large circle of courtiers gathers at a respectful distance, from whence no one can overhear the sovereign's conversation, though all eyes continue fixed upon him.

It is not the prince who is likely to embarrass you when he does you the honour of conversing; it is his suite.

The emperor continued: — "It is not very easy to prosecute this work: submission may cause you to believe that there is uniformity among us, but I must undeceive you; there is no other country where is found such diversity of races, of manners, of religion, and of mind, as in Russia. The diversity lies at the bottom, the uniformity appears on the surface, and the unity is only apparent. You see near to us twenty

officers, the two first only are Russians; the three next to them are conciliated Poles; several of the others are Germans; there are even the Khans of the Kirguises, who bring me their sons to educate among my cadets. There is one of them," he said, pointing with his finger to a little Chinese monkey, in a whimsical costume of velvet all bedizened with gold.

"Two hundred thousand children are brought up and instructed at my cost with this child."

"Sire, every thing is done on a large scale in this country — every thing is colossal."

"Too colossal for one man."

"What man has ever stood in nearer relation to his people?"

"You speak of Peter the Great?"

"No, sire."

"I hope that you will not be content with merely seeing Petersburg. What is your plan of route in visiting my country?"

"Sire, I wish to leave immediately after the fête of Peterhoff."

"To go ——?"

"To Moscow and Nijna."

"Good: but you will be there too soon: you will leave Moscow before my arrival, and I should have been glad to see you there."

"This observation of your majesty's will cause me to change my plan."

"So much the better; we will show you the new works that we are making at the Kremlin. My object is to render the architecture of these old edifices better adapted to the uses now made of them. The palace was inconveniently small for me. You

will be present also at a curious ceremony on the plain of Borodino: I am to place there the first stone of a monument which we are about to erect in commemoration of that battle."

I remained silent, and no doubt the expression of my face became serious. The emperor fixed his eyes on me, and then continued, in a tone of kindness and with a delicacy and even sensibility of manner which touched my heart, — "The inspection of the manœuvres *at least* will interest you."

"Sire, every thing interests me in Russia."

I saw the old Marquis B——g, who has only one leg, dance the polonaise with the empress. Lame as he is, he can get through this dance, which is nothing more than a solemn procession. He has arrived here with his sons: they travel like real great lords; a yacht brought them from London to Petersburg, where they have had forwarded English horses and carriages in great number. Their equipages are the most elegant, if they are not the most sumptuous, in Petersburg. These travellers are treated with marked attention. They are intimate with the imperial family. The emperor's love of field sports, and the recollection of his journey to London when Grand Duke, have established between him and the Marquis D—— that kind of familiarity which, it appears to me, must be more pleasant to the princes than to the private individuals who have become the objects of such favour. Where friendship is impossible, intimacy I should think can be only constraining. One would have said, to have sometimes seen the manners of the marquis's sons towards the members of the imperial family, that they thought on this subject as I did. If

freedom of manners and speech should gain a footing at court, where will falsehood and politeness find a refuge? *

Young —— is at Petersburg: we meet every where, and with pleasure; he is a type of the Frenchman of the present day, but truly well bred. He appears to be enchanted with every thing. This satisfaction is so natural that it becomes contagious,

* Some days after this was written, a little scene occurred at court which will give some idea of the manners of the most fashionable young people among the English in the present day: they have no right to reproach, nor yet any reason to envy, the least polite of our Parisian exquisites: — what a difference between this kind of blackguard elegance, and the politeness of the Buckinghams, the Lauzuns, and the Richelieus! The empress wished to give a private ball as a mark of attention to this family before their leaving Petersburg. She began by inviting the father, who dances so well with an artificial leg. "Madame," replied the old Marquis D——, "I have been loaded with kindnesses at Petersburg; but so many pleasures surpass my powers: I hope that your majesty will permit me to take my leave this evening, that I may get on board my yacht to-morrow morning, in order to return to England; otherwise I shall die of pleasure in Russia." "Well, then, I must give you up," replied the empress, satisfied with this polite and manly answer, worthy of the times in which the old lord must have first entered the world; then turning towards the sons of the marquis, whose stay in Petersburg was to be prolonged: "At least I may depend on you?" she said to the eldest. "Madame," replied this individual, "we are engaged to hunt the rein-deer to-day." The empress, who is said to be proud, was not discouraged, and, addressing herself to the younger brother, said, "You, at least, will remain with me?" The young man, at a loss for an excuse, and not knowing what to answer, in his vexation turned to his brother, murmuring, loudly enough to be overheard, "Am I then to be the victim?" This anecdote went the round of the whole court.

and I doubt not the young man pleases as much as he is pleased. He travels to advantage, is well informed, and collects numerous facts, which he can number better than he can class; for at his age it is more easy to sum up than to arrange. But what a richly varied conversation is that of our ambassador! and how much will literature regret the time which he gives to politics, unless the latter be only a study by which the former will profit hereafter! Never was a man more perfectly adapted to his place, or one who played his part with greater ability, united with more apparent ease and freedom from any assumption of importance. It is this combination which appears to me to constitute, in the present day, the condition of success for every Frenchman occupied with public affairs. No one, since the revolution of July, has fulfilled, so well as M. de Barante, the difficult charge of French ambassador at Petersburg.

In connection with the marriage fetês given in honour of the Grand Duchess Marie, a little incident occurred which will remind the reader of what often happened at the court of the Emperor Napoleon.

The grand chamberlain had died shortly before the marriage, and his office had been given to Count Golowkin, formerly Russian ambassador to China, to which country he could not obtain access. This nobleman, entering upon the functions of his office on the occasion of the marriage, had less experience than his predecessor. A young chamberlain, appointed by him, managed to incur the wrath of the emperor, and exposed his superior to a rather severe reprimand: it was at the ball of the Grand Duchess Helena.

The emperor was talking with the Austrian ambas-

sador. The young chamberlain received from the Grand Duchess Marie an order to carry her invitation to this ambassador to dance with her. In his zeal the unfortunate *débutant* broke the circle of courtiers which I have before described as forming at a respectful distance around the emperor, and boldly approached his majesty's person, saying to the ambassador, "Monsieur le Comte, Madame la Duchesse de Leuchtenberg requests that you will dance with her the first polonaise."

The emperor, shocked with the ignorance of the new chamberlain, said to him, in an elevated tone of voice, "You have been appointed to a post, sir; learn, therefore, how to fulfil its duties: in the first place, my daughter is not the Duchess of Leuchtenberg — she is called the Grand Duchess Marie*; in the second place, you ought to know that no one interrupts me when I am conversing with any individual." †

The new chamberlain who received this harsh reprimand was, unfortunately, a poor Polish gentleman. The emperor, not content with what he had said, caused the grand chamberlain to be called, and recommended him to be, in future, more circumspect in his selection of deputies.

I left the ball of the Michael Palace at an early hour. I loitered on the staircase, and could have wished to remain there longer: it was a wood of

* This title had been secured to her at her marriage.

† Did I not truly say that, at this court, life is passed in general rehearsals? An Emperor of Russia, from Peter the Great, downwards, never forgets that it is his office personally to instruct his people.

orange trees in flower. Never have I seen any thing more magnificent or better directed than this fête; but there is nothing so fatiguing as admiration too greatly prolonged, especially if it does not relate to the phenomena of nature, or the works of the higher arts.

I lay down my pen in order to dine with a Russian officer, the young Count ——, who took me this morning to the cabinet of mineralogy, the finest I believe in Europe, for the Uralian mines are unequalled in the variety of their mineral wealth. Nothing can be seen here alone. A native of the country is always with you to do the honours of the public establishments and institutions, and there are not many days in the year favourable for seeing them. In summer they are repairing the edifices damaged by the frosts, in winter there is nothing but visiting: every one dances who does not freeze. It will be thought I am exaggerating when I say that Russia is scarcely better seen in Petersburg than in France. Strip the observation of its paradoxical form and it is strictly true. Most assuredly it is not sufficient to visit this country in order to know it. Without the aid of others, it is not possible to obtain an idea of any thing, and often this aid tyrannises over its object, and imbues him with ideas only that are fallacious.*

* This is done designedly.

CHAP. XIII.

THE LADIES OF THE COURT. — THE FINNS. — THE OPERA. — THE EMPEROR THERE. — IMPOSING PERSON OF THIS PRINCE. — HIS ACCESSION TO THE THRONE. — COURAGE OF THE EMPRESS. — THE EMPEROR'S RECITAL OF THIS SCENE TO THE AUTHOR. — ANOTHER DESCRIPTION OF THE EMPEROR. — CONTINUATION OF HIS CONVERSATION. — HIS POLITICAL OPINIONS. — SINCERITY OF HIS LANGUAGE. — FÊTE AT THE DUCHESS OF OLDENBURG'S. — BAL CHAMPÊTRE. — FLOWERS IN RUSSIA. — THE FRIEND OF THE EMPRESS. — SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS WITH THE EMPEROR. — HIS NOBLE SENTIMENTS. — CONFIDENCE WITH WHICH HE INSPIRES THOSE WHO APPROACH HIM. — ARISTOCRACY THE ONLY RAMPART OF LIBERTY. — PARALLEL BETWEEN AUTOCRACIES AND DEMOCRACIES. — THE ARTS IN PETERSBURG. — ALL TRUE TALENT IS NATIONAL.

SEVERAL of the ladies of this court, but their number is not great, have a reputation for beauty which is deserved; others have usurped this reputation by means of coquetries, contrivances, and affectations — all copied from the English; for the Russians in high life pass their time in searching for foreign models of fashion. They are deceived sometimes in their choice, when their mistake produces a singular kind of elegance — an elegance without taste. A Russian left to himself would spend his life in dreams of unsatisfied vanity: he would view himself as a barbarian. Nothing more injures the natural disposition, and consequently the mental powers, of a people, than this continual dwelling upon the social superiority of other nations. To feel humbled by

the very sense of one's own assumption is an inconsistency in the actings of self-love which is not unfrequently to be seen in Russia, where the character of the *parvenu* may be studied under all its grades and phases.

As a general rule applicable to the different classes of the nation, beauty is less common among the women than the men; though among the latter also may be found great numbers whose faces are flat and void of all expression. The Finns have high cheek bones, small, dull, sunken eyes, and visages so flattened that it might be fancied they had all, at their birth, fallen on their noses. Their mouth is also deformed, and their whole appearance bears the impress of the slave. This portrait does not apply to the Slavonians.

I have met many people marked with the small-pox, a sight rarely now seen in other parts of Europe, and which betrays the negligence of the Russian administration on an important point.

In Petersburg the different races are so mingled, that it is impossible to form a correct idea of the real population of Russia. Germans, Swedes, Livonians, Finns (who are a species of Laplanders), Calmucs and other Tartar races, have so mixed their blood with that of the Slavonians, that the primitive beauty of the latter has, in the capital, gradually degenerated; which leads me often to think of the observation of the emperor, "Petersburg is Russian, but it is not Russia."

I have been witnessing at the opera what is called a *gala* representation. The building was magnificiently lighted: it is large, and well proportioned.

Galleries and projecting boxes are unknown here: there is at Petersburg no citizen class for whom to provide seats. The architect, therefore, unfettered in his plan, can construct theatres of a simple and regular design, like those of Italy, where the women who are not of the highest ranks are seated in the pit.

By special favour I obtained a chair in the first row of the pit. On gala days these chairs are reserved for the greatest nobles, and the high court functionaries, and none are admitted to them except in the uniform or costume of their rank or office.

My right-hand neighbour, seeing from my dress that I was a stranger, addressed me in French with that hospitable politeness, which in Petersburg is a characteristic of the higher, and, to a certain extent, of all classes; for here every one is polite—the great, through the vanity of showing their good breeding, the little, through sentiments of fear.

After a few common-place observations, I asked my obliging neighbour the name of the piece that was to be performed. "It is a translation from the French," he answered: "The Devil on two Sticks." I puzzled my head to no purpose to make out what drama could have been translated under this title; at length it turned out that the *translation* was a pantomime founded on our ballet of the same name.

I did not much admire it, and directed my attention chiefly to the audience. At length, the court arrived. The imperial box is an elegant saloon, which occupies the back part of the theatre, and which is even yet more brilliantly illuminated.

The entrance of the emperor was imposing. As he advanced to the front of his box, accompanied by

the empress, and followed by their family and the attendant courtiers, the public rose simultaneously. The emperor was dressed in a singularly splendid red uniform. That of the Cossacks looks well only on very young men: the one which the emperor wore better suited his age, and greatly set off the nobleness of his features and his stature. Before seating himself, he saluted the assembly with the peculiarly polite dignity by which he is characterised. The empress did the same, and, what appeared to me a want of respect towards the public, their suite followed their example. The whole theatre rendered to the sovereigns bow for bow, and, furthermore, overwhelmed them with plaudits and *hurras*. These demonstrations had an official character which greatly diminished their value. Wonderful that an emperor should be applauded by a pit-ful of courtiers! In Russia, real flattery would be the appearance of independence. The Russians have not found out this indirect mode of pleasing; and, in truth, its use might sometimes become perilous, notwithstanding the feeling of *ennui* which the servility of his subjects must often produce in the prince.

The compulsory manifestations of submission with which he is every where received is the reason why the present emperor has only twice in his life had the satisfaction of testing his personal power upon the assembled multitude — and this was during an insurrection. The only free man in Russia is the revolted soldier.

Viewed from the point where I sat, the emperor appeared truly worthy of commanding men; so noble was his face, and so majestic his figure. My mind

involuntarily recurred to the period when he mounted the throne, and the contemplation of that bright page of history led my thoughts away from the scene that was enacting before me.

What I am now about to narrate was detailed to me by the emperor himself, only a few days ago. The reason that it was not stated in the last chapter is because the papers* containing such details could not be confided either to the Russian post or to any traveller.

The day on which Nicholas ascended the throne was that in which rebellion broke out among the guards. At the first intimation of the revolt of the troops, the emperor and empress proceeded alone to their chapel, and falling on their knees on the steps of the altar, bound each other by mutual oath before God, to die as sovereigns, if they should be unable to triumph over the insurrection.

The emperor might well view the evil as serious, for he had been informed that the archbishop had already vainly endeavoured to appease the soldiers. In Russia, when religious power loses its influence, disorder is indeed formidable.

After solemnly making the sign of the cross, the emperor proceeded to confront the rebels, and to overmaster them by his presence, and by the calm energy of his countenance. He stated this to me in terms more modest than those which I now use, and of which, unfortunately, I have not preserved the recollection, for at first I was rather taken by surprise, owing to the unexpected turn of the conversation. Of what passed after recovering from this surprise my memory is more tenacious.

* Despatched in the form of a letter to Paris. — *Trans.*

"Sire, your majesty drew your strength from the right source."

"I did not know what I was about to do or say—I was inspired."

"To receive such inspirations, it is necessary to merit them."

"I did nothing extraordinary; I said to the soldiers, 'Return to your ranks!' and at the moment of passing the regiment in review, I cried, 'On your knees!' They all obeyed. What gave me power was, that the instant before I had resigned myself to meet death. I am grateful for having succeeded; but I am not proud of it, for it was by no merit of my own."

Such were the noble expressions which the emperor made use of in relating to me this contemporary tragedy.

From the above relation an idea may be formed of the interesting nature of the subjects on which he converses with the travellers whom he honours with his good-will. It will also explain the character of the influence he exercises over ourselves, as well as over his people and his family. He is the Louis XIV. of the Slavonians.

Eye-witnesses have informed me that his form seemed to dilate and grow more lofty and commanding at each step that he made in advancing towards the mutineers. Taciturn, melancholy, and absorbed in trifles as he had appeared during his youth, he became a hero the moment he was a monarch. The contrary is usually the case—and princes promise more than they perform.

This prince is, on the throne, as perfectly in his

proper sphere as a great actor would be on the boards. His attitude before the rebel-guard was so imposing, that while he harangued the troops one of the conspirators, it is said, advanced four times towards him with the intention of killing him, and four times his courage failed, like that of the Cimbrian's before Marius.

An absurd falsehood was the instrument that the conspirators had employed to incite the army to this outbreak. They had spread a report that Nicholas had usurped the crown of his brother Constantine, who was, they said, on his way to Petersburg, to defend his rights by force of arms. The means through which they had induced the rebels to cry under the palace windows in favour of the Constitution, was by persuading them that this word *Constitution* was the name of the wife of Constantine. It was therefore an idea of duty which actuated the soldiers, who believed the emperor an usurper, and who could only be led into rebellion by a fraud. The fact is, that Constantine had refused the crown through weakness: he dreaded being poisoned. God knows, and there are perhaps some men who know also, if his abdication saved him from the peril which he thus expected to avoid.

It was then in support of legitimacy that the deceived soldiers revolted against their legitimate sovereign. People remarked that, during the whole time the emperor remained among the troops, he did not once put his horse in rapid motion, but though so calm, he was very pale. He was putting his power to the test, and the success of the proof assured him of the future obedience of his people.

Such a man cannot be judged by the standard applied to ordinary characters. His grave and authoritative voice — his magnetic and piercing look, which is often cold and fixed rather through the habit of suppressing his passions than of dissimulating his thoughts, for he is frank — his superb forehead — his features, which are those of an Apollo or a Jupiter — his immovable, imposing, and imperious expression — his figure, more noble than easy, more monumental than human, exercise upon all who approach his person a power which is irresistible. He becomes master of the wills of others, because it is seen that he is master of his own.

The following is what I have retained of the remainder of our conversation: —

"The insurrection thus appeased, your majesty must have entered the palace with feelings very different to those under which it was left; not only the throne, but the admiration of the world, and the sympathy of all lofty minds being, by this event, assured to your majesty."

"I did not thus view it: what I then did has been too much praised."

The emperor did not tell me that on his return he found his wife afflicted with a nervous trembling of the head, of which she has never been entirely cured. This convulsive motion is scarcely visible; indeed, on some days, when calm and in good health, the empress is entirely free from it: but whenever she is suffering, either mentally or physically, the evil returns and augments. This noble woman must have fearfully struggled with the inquietude occasioned by her husband's daring exposure of himself to the assassin's

blow. On his return, she embraced him without speaking; but the emperor, after having soothed her, felt himself grow weak, and threw himself into the arms of one of his most faithful servants, exclaiming — "What a commencement of a reign!"

I publish these details, because it is well they should be known, in order to teach the obscure to envy less the fortune of the great.

Whatever apparent inequality legislation may have established in the different conditions of civilised men, the equity of Providence justifies itself by maintaining a secret equality, which nothing can alter or disturb. This is done by the agency of mental evils, which generally increase in the same ratio that physical evils diminish. There is less injustice in the world than the founders and legislators of nations have endeavoured to produce, or than the vulgar imagine they perceive: the laws of nature are more equitable than the laws of man.

These reflections passed rapidly through my mind as I conversed with the emperor, producing in me a sentiment which he would, I believe, have been rather surprised to learn that he had inspired — it was that of indescribable pity. I took care to conceal the emotion, and continued:

"I can truly say, sire, that one of the chief motives of my curiosity in visiting Russia was the desire of approaching a prince who exercises such power over men."

"The Russians are amiable; but he should render himself worthy who would govern such a people."

"Your majesty has better appreciated the wants

and the position of this country than any of your predecessors."

"Despotism still exists in Russia: it is the essence of my government, but it accords with the genius of the nation."

"Sire, by stopping Russia on the road of imitation, you are restoring her to herself."

"I love my country, and I believe I understand it. I assure you, that when I feel heartily weary of all the miseries of the times, I endeavour to forget the rest of Europe by retiring towards the interior of Russia."

"In order to refresh yourself at your fountain-head?"

"Precisely so. No one is more from his heart a Russian than I am. I am going to say to you what I would not say to another, but I feel that you will comprehend me."

Here the emperor interrupted himself, and looked at me attentively. I continued to listen without replying, and he proceeded: —

"I can understand republicanism: it is a plain and straightforward form of government, or, at least, it might be so; I can understand absolute monarchy, for I am myself the head of such an order of things; but I cannot understand a representative monarchy. it is the government of lies, fraud, and corruption; and I would rather fall back even upon China than ever adopt it."

"Sire, I have always regarded representative government as a compact inevitable in certain communities at certain epochs; but like all other com-

pacts, it does not solve questions — it only adjourns difficulties."

The emperor seemed to say, Go on. I continued:

"It is a truce signed between democracy and monarchy, under the auspices of two very mean tyrants, fear and interest; and it is prolonged by that pride of intellect which takes pleasure in talking, and that popular vanity which satisfies itself on words. In short, it is the aristocracy of oratory, substituted for the aristocracy of birth: it is the government of the lawyers."

"Sir, you speak the truth," said the emperor, pressing my hand: "I have been a representative sovereign *, and the world knows what it has cost me not to have been willing to submit to the exigencies of *this infamous* government (I quote literally). To buy votes, to corrupt consciences, to seduce some in order to deceive others; all those means I disdained, as degrading those who obey as much as those who command, and I have dearly paid the penalty of my straightforwardness; but, God be praised, I have done for ever with this detestable political machine. I shall never more be a constitutional king. I have too much need of saying all that I think ever to consent to reign over any people by means of stratagem and intrigue."

The name of Poland, which presented itself incessantly to our thoughts, was not once uttered in this singular conversation.

The effect it produced on me was great. I felt myself subdued. The nobleness of sentiment which the

* In Poland.

emperor displayed, and the frankness of his language, seemed to me greatly to temper his omnipotence.

I confess I was dazzled! A man who could, notwithstanding my ideas of independence, make himself forgiven for being absolute monarch of sixty millions of fellow-beings, was, in my eyes, something beyond our common nature; but I distrusted my own admiration. I felt like the citizens among us, who, when surprised by the grace and address of the men of other days are tempted by their good taste to yield to the captivating lure, but their principles resisting, they remain uncomfortably stiff, and endeavour to appear as insensible as possible. It is not in my nature to doubt a man's words at the moment they are addressed to me. A human being who speaks is to me the organ of Deity: it is only by dint of reflection and experience that I recognise the possibility of design and disguise. This may be called a foolish simplicity, which perhaps it is; but I solace myself for such mental weakness by the recollection that its source is a mental virtue: my own good faith makes me believe in the sincerity of others, even in that of an emperor of Russia.

The beauty of his face is also another instrument of persuasion, for this beauty is moral as well as physical. I attribute its effect to the truth of his sentiments, yet more than to the regularity of his features. It was at a ball at the Duchess of Oldenburg's that I had this interesting conversation with the emperor. The fête was singular, and deserves describing.

The Duchess of Oldenburg, who was a princess of Nassau, is nearly allied, through her husband, to the emperor. She wished to give a soirée on the occa-

sion of the marriage of the Grand Duchess but being unable to excel the magnificence of the former fêtes, or to vie with the splendours of the court, she conceived the idea of a bal champêtre at her house in the Islands.

The Archduke of Austria, who arrived two days ago to be present at the festivities of Petersburg; the ambassadors of the whole world (singular actors in a pastoral); all Russia, and finally, all the high-born foreigners, gathered together to promenade with an air of innocent simplicity, in a garden where orchestras were concealed among the distant groves.

The emperor prescribes the character of each fête: the direction for this day was, the elegant simplicity of Horace.

The humour of all minds, including even the *corps diplomatique*, was throughout the evening modelled in conformity with this order. It was like reading an eclogue, not of Theocritus or Virgil, but of Fontenelle.

We danced in the open air until eleven in the evening, and then, the heavy dews having sufficiently inundated the heads and shoulders of the women, young and old, who assisted at this triumph over the climate, we re-entered the little palace which forms the usual summer-residence of the Duchess of Oldenburg.

In the centre of the villa * was a rotunda, quite dazzling with gold and wax lights, in which the dancers continued their amusement, while the others wandered over the rest of the house, to which this bright rotunda formed, as it were, a central sun.

* In Russian, "the datcha."

There presided throughout the fête, which was smaller than the preceding ones, a species of splendid disorder that struck me more than the pomp of all the others. Without speaking of the comical constraint depicted on the countenances of certain parties who were obliged, for a time, to affect rural simplicity, it was a soirée altogether original, a species of Imperial Tivoli, where people felt themselves almost free, although in presence of an absolute master. The sovereign who enjoys himself seems no longer a despot, and this evening the emperor enjoyed himself.

The excessive heats of the present summer had fortunately favoured the design of the duchess. Her summer-house is situated in the most beautiful part of the Islands, and it was in the midst of a garden radiant with flowers (in pots), and upon an English grass-plot — another marvel here — that she had fixed her dancing saloon. This was a superb inlaid flooring, surrounded by elegant balustrades, richly embellished with flowers, and to which the sky served as ceiling. In Petersburg the luxury of rare flowers, reared in the hot-house, supplies the place of trees. Its inhabitants — men who have left Asia to imprison themselves among the snows of the north — recollect the oriental luxury of their earlier country, and do their best to supply the sterility of nature, which, left to herself, produces only pine and birch trees. Art raises here an infinite variety of shrubs and plants; for as every thing is artificial, it is just as easy to grow the exotic flowers of America as the violets and lilacs of France.

The empress, delicate as she is, danced, with her neck bare and her head uncovered, every polonaise

at this magnificent ball in the garden of her cousin. In Russia every body pursues his career to the limits of his powers. The duty of an empress is to amuse herself to death.

This German princess, the victim of a frivolity which must surely press as heavily as chains upon captives, enjoys in Russia a happiness rarely enjoyed in any land, or in any rank, and unexampled in the life of an empress—she has a friend. Of this lady, the Baroness de ——, I have already spoken. She and the empress, since the marriage of the latter, have scarcely ever been separated. The baroness, whose character is sincere, and whose heart is devoted, has not profited by her position. The man whom she has married is one of the officers in the army to whom the emperor is most indebted; for the Baron —— saved his life on the day of the revolt that attended the accession to the throne, by exposing his own with a devotedness unprompted by interest. Nothing could be sufficient reward for such an act of courage, it has, consequently, gone unrewarded.

As the garden became dark, a distant music answered to the orchestra of the ball, and harmoniously chased away the gloom of the night, a gloom too natural to these monotonous shades. The desert recommences on the Islands, where the pines and morasses of Finland adjoin the prettiest parks. An arm of the Neva flows slowly — for here all water appears stagnant — before the windows of the little princely house of the Duchess of Oldenburg. On this evening the water was covered with boats full of spectators, and the road also swarmed with pedestrians. A mixed crowd of citizens, who are as much slaves

as the peasants, and of work-people, all courtiers of courtiers, pressed among the carriages of the grandees to gaze on the livery of the master of their masters. The whole spectacle was striking and original. In Russia, the names are the same as elsewhere, but the things are altogether different. I often escaped from the throng of the ball to walk beneath the trees of the park, and muse on the melancholy that insinuates itself into the festivals of such a land. But my meditations were short, for on this day the emperor seemed as though determined to keep possession of my mind. Was it because he had discovered in the bottom of my heart some prejudices little favourable towards him, though the result only of what I had heard before being presented; or did he find it amusing to converse for a few moments with one who differed from those that daily came in his way, or was it that Madame de —— had created an influence in his mind in my favour? I could not explain to my own satisfaction the cause of receiving so much honour.

The emperor is not only accustomed to command actions, he knows how to reign over hearts: perhaps he wished to conquer mine; perhaps the ices of my shyness served to stimulate his self-love. The desire of pleasing is natural to him: to compel admiration would still be to make himself obeyed. Perhaps he had a desire of trying his power on a stranger; perhaps, in short, it was the instinct of a man who had long lived deprived of the truth, and who believed he had for once met with a sincere character. I repeat, I was ignorant of his motives; but on that evening I could not stand before him, nor even place

myself in a retired corner of the room where he might be, without his obliging me to approach and talk with him.

On seeing me enter the ball-room, he said, "What have you seen this morning?"

"Sire, I have been visiting the Cabinet of Natural History, and the famous Mammoth of Siberia."

"It is an object unequalled, in its kind, in the world."

"Yes, sire; there are many things in Russia that are not to be seen elsewhere."

"You flatter me."

"I respect your majesty too much to dare to flatter; but perhaps, sire, I do not fear you sufficiently; and I therefore ingenuously speak my thoughts, when even truth appears like compliment."

"This is a delicate compliment, monsieur: you strangers spoil us."

"Sire, your majesty was pleased to desire that I should be at my ease with you, and you have succeeded, as in every thing else that you undertake. Your majesty has cured me, for a time at least, of my natural timidity."

Obliged to avoid all allusion to the great political interests of the day, I wished to lead the conversation towards a subject which interested me quite as much; I added, therefore, "Each time that I am permitted to approach your majesty, I recognise the power which caused your enemies to fall at your feet on the day that your majesty ascended the throne."

"In your country there are prejudices entertained against us, which are more difficult to triumph over than the passions of a revolted army."

"Sire, you are seen from too great a distance: if your majesty were better known you would be better appreciated, and would find among us, as well as here, abundance of admirers. The commencement of your majesty's reign has already called forth just praises; it was also equally, or even yet more highly lauded at the time of the cholera; for in this second insurrection your majesty displayed the same authority, but tempered with the most generous devotion to the cause of humanity. Energy has never failed you, sire, in times of danger."

"The moments of which you recall the recollection have been, doubtless, the best in my life; nevertheless, they have appeared to me as the most frightful."

"I can well understand that, sire; to subdue nature in ourselves and in others requires an effort ——"

"An effort which is terrible," interrupted the emperor, with an energy which startled me, "and one that is felt long after."

"Yes; but there is the consolation of having acted heroically."

"I have not acted heroically. I only performed my part: in such circumstances none can tell what he will say. We run into the danger, without previously inquiring how we are to get out of it."

"It was God who inspired you, sire; and if two so dissimilar things as poetry and government may be compared, I should say that you acted in the same way that poets sing, in listening to the voice from above."

"There was no poetry in that action."

I could perceive that my comparison had not appeared flattering, because it had not been under-

stood in the sense of the Latin poet. At court they are in the habit of viewing poetry as merely an exhibition of wit; and it would have been necessary to have launched into a discussion to prove that it is the purest and most brilliant light that irradiates the soul. I therefore preferred remaining silent; but the emperor, being unwilling, doubtless, to leave me under the regret of having displeased him, detained me yet further, to the great astonishment of the court, and resumed the conversation with a kindness that was very gratifying. "What is your decided plan of route?" he asked.

"Sire, after the fête at Peterhoff, I propose leaving for Moscow, from whence I wish to proceed to Nijni, to see the fair, and to return to Moscow before the arrival of your majesty."

"So much the better: I shall be glad for you to examine, in detail, my works at the Kremlin. My residence there was too small, I am therefore building another more suitable; and I will explain to you myself all my plans for the embellishment of this part of Moscow, which we view as the cradle of the empire. But you have no time to lose, for you have immense distances to travel over — the distances! these are the curse of Russia."

"Do not, sire, regret them: they form the canvas of pictures that are to be filled up; elsewhere the earth is too confined for the inhabitants; but it will never fail your majesty."

"The time fails me."

"You have the future."

"They little know me who reproach my ambition: far from seeking to extend our territory, I am desi-

rous of drawing closer around me the entire population of Russia. It is simply over misery and barbarism that I wish to achieve conquests; to ameliorate the condition of the Russians would be more gratifying than to aggrandise myself. If you knew what an amiable people the Russians are! how gentle, and how naturally polite! You will see them at Peterhoff; but it is here, on the first of January, that I would have especially desired to show them to you." Then, returning to his favourite theme, he continued: "But it is not easy to render one's self worthy of governing such a people."

"Your majesty has already done much for Russia."

"I fear sometimes that I have not done all that might have been effected."

This Christian speech came from the depths of the heart, and affected me even to tears: it made so much impression on me that I said to myself, The emperor has quicker perceptions than I; and if he had any motive for saying this he would have felt greater difficulty in saying it. He has, then, only betrayed a beautiful and noble sentiment, the scruple of a conscientious king. This cry of humanity uttered by a mind which every thing must contribute to render proud, touched my heart. We were in public, and I endeavoured to hide my feeling; the emperor, who answers to what is thought more than to what is said, (and in this sagacity lies the great charm of his conversation, as well as the potency of his influence,) perceiving the impression which he had produced, and which I attempted to disguise, approached me at the moment of parting, took my

hand with an air of kindness, and pressing it, said, *Au revoir.*"

The emperor is the only man in the empire with whom one may talk without fear of informers; he is also the only one in whom I have as yet recognised natural sentiments and sincere language. If I lived in this country, and had a secret to conceal, I should begin by confiding it to him.

If he has, as I think, more pride than vanity, more dignity than arrogance, the general impression of the various portraits I have successively traced of him, and especially the effect his conversation produced on me, ought to be satisfactory to him: in fact, I did my best to resist the influence of his attractions. I am certainly any thing but revolutionary, still I am revolutionised: such is the consequence of being born in France, and of living there. But I have a yet better reason to give in explanation of my endeavour to resist the influence of the emperor over me. Aristocrat, both from character and conviction, I feel that the aristocracy alone can resist either the seductions or the abuses of absolute power. Without an aristocracy, there would be nothing but tyranny both in monarchies and in democracies. The sight of despotism is revolting to me in spite of myself: it offends all the ideas of liberty which spring alike from my natural feelings and my political creed. No aristocrat can submit without repugnance to see the levelling hand of despotism laid upon the people. This however happens in pure democracies as much as in absolute monarchical governments.

It appears to me, that if I were a sovereign I should like the society of those who would recognise

in me the fellow-being as well as the prince, especially if, when viewed apart from my titles, and reduced to myself, I should still have a right to the title of a sincere, firm, and upright man.

Let the reader seriously ask himself, if that which I have recounted of the Emperor Nicholas, since my arrival in Russia places this prince lower in his opinion than before he had read these chapters.

Our frequent communications in public gained me numerous acquaintances, as well as renewal of acquaintances. Many persons whom I had met elsewhere cast themselves in my way, though only after they had observed that I was the object of this particular good-will on the part of the sovereign. These men were the most exalted persons at court; but it is the custom of people of the world, and especially of placemen, to be sparing of every thing except ambitious schemes. To preserve at court sentiments above the vulgar range, requires the endowment of a very lofty mind, and lofty minds are rare.

It cannot be too often repeated, that there are no great noblemen in Russia, because there are no independent characters, with the exception, at least, of those superior minds, which are too few in number to exercise any general influence on society. It is the pride inspired by high birth, which, far more than riches or rank acquired by industry, renders man independent.

This country, in many respects so different from France, still resembles it in one — it is without any social hierarchy. By reason of this gap in the body politic, universal equality reigns in Russia as in France, and therefore, in both countries, the minds of

men are restless and unquiet: with us this is demonstrated by visible agitations and explosions, in Russia, political passions are concentrated. In France every one can arrive at his object, by setting out from the tribune, in Russia, by setting out at court. The lowest of men, if he can discover how to please his sovereign, may become to-morrow second only to the emperor. The favour of that god is the prize which produces as many prodigies of effort, and miraculous metamorphoses, as the desire of popularity among us. A profound flatterer in Petersburg is the same as a sublime orator in Paris. What a talent of observation must not that have been in the Russian courtiers, which enabled them to discover that a means of pleasing the emperor was to walk in winter without a great coat in the streets of Petersburg. This flattery of the climate has cost the life of more than one ambitious individual. Under a despotism which is without limits, minds are as much agitated and tormented as under a republic; but with this difference, the agitation of the subjects of an autocracy is more painful on account of the silence and concealment that ambition has to impose upon itself in order to succeed. With us, sacrifices, to be profitable, have to be public; here, on the contrary, they must be secret. The unlimited monarch dislikes no one so much as a subject *publicly* devoted. All zeal that exceeds a blind and servile obedience is felt by him as both troublesome and suspicious: exceptions open the door to pretensions, pretensions assume the shape of rights, and under a despot, a subject who fancies that he has rights is a rebel.

Marshal Paskiewitch can attest the truth of these

remarks: they do not dare to ruin him, but they do all that is possible to make him a cipher. Before this journey, my ideas of despotism were suggested by my study of society in Austria and Prussia. I had forgotten that those states are despotic only in name, and that manners and customs there serve to correct institutions. In Germany, the people despotically governed appeared to me the happiest upon earth; a despotism thus mitigated by the mildness of its customs caused me to think that despotism was not after all so detestable a thing as our philosophers had pretended. I did not then know what absolute government was among a nation of slaves.

It is to Russia that we must go in order to see the results of this terrible combination of the mind and science of Europe with the genius of Asia — a combination which is so much the more formidable as it is likely to last; for ambition and fear, passions which elsewhere ruin men by causing them to speak too much, here engender silence. This forced silence produces a forced calm, an apparent order, more strong and more frightful than anarchy itself. I admit but few fundamental rules in politics, because in the art of government I believe more in the efficacy of circumstances than of principles, but my indifference does not go so far as to tolerate institutions which necessarily exclude all dignity of human character in their objects.

Perhaps an independent judiciary and a powerful aristocracy would instil a calm and an elevation into the Russian character, and render the land happy; but I do not believe the emperor dreams of such modes

of ameliorating the condition of his people. However superior a man may be, he does not voluntarily renounce his own way of doing good to others.

But what right have we to reproach the Emperor of Russia with his love of authority? Is not the genius of revolution as tyrannical at Paris as the genius of despotism at Petersburg?

At the same time, we owe it to ourselves to make here a restriction that will show the difference between the social state of the two countries. In France, revolutionary tyranny is an evil belonging to a state of transition; in Russia, despotic tyranny is permanent.

It is fortunate for the reader that I have wandered from the subject with which I commenced my chapter, namely, the illuminated theatre, the gala representation, and the *translated* pantomime (a Russian expression) of a French ballet. Had I continued my description, he might have experienced a little of the *ennui* with which this dramatic solemnity inspired me; for the dancing at the Opera of Petersburg, without Madamoiselle Taglioni, is as cold and stiff as the dances of all European theatres when they are not executed by the first talents in the world; and the presence of the court encourages neither actors nor audience, for, before the sovereign, it is not permitted to applaud. The arts, disciplined as they are in Russia, produce interludes which do very well to amuse soldiers during the intervals of military command. They are magnificent, royal, imperial—but they are not really amusing. Here the *artistes* obtain wealth, but they do not draw inspiration:

riches and elegance foster talents; but that which is yet more indispensable to them is the good taste and the freedom of public opinion.

The Russians have not yet reached the point of civilisation at which there is real enjoyment of the arts. At present their enthusiasm on these subjects is pure vanity; it is a pretence, like their passion for classic architecture. Let these people look within themselves, let them listen to their primitive genius, and, if they have received from Heaven a perception of the beauties of art, they will give up copying, in order to produce what God and nature expect from them. So far, all their magnificent works together will never be equivalent, in the eyes of those few real amateurs of the beautiful who vegetate at Petersburg, to a sojourn in Paris, or a journey in Italy.

The Opera-house is built on the plan of those of Milan and Naples; but these latter are more stately, and more harmonious in their proportions, than any thing of the kind which I have yet seen in Russia.

CHAP. XIV.

THE POPULATION OF PETERSBURG. — SOLITUDE OF THE STREETS. — THE ARCHITECTURE. — PLACE DU CAROUSEL IN PARIS. — SQUARE OF THE GRAND DUKE AT FLORENCE. — THE PERSPECTIVE NEWSKI. — PAVEMENTS. — EFFECTS OF THE THAW. — INTERIOR OF THE HOUSES. — THE BEDS. — VISIT TO PRINCE ——. — BOWERS IN THE DRAWING-ROOMS. — BEAUTY OF THE SLAVONIAN MEN. — RUSSIAN COACHMEN AND POSTILLIONS. — THE FELD-JÄGER. — THE POETICAL ASPECT OF THE LAND. — CONTRAST BETWEEN MEN AND THINGS. — ARCHITECTURE OF THE CHURCHES. — A GENERAL VIEW OF PETERSBURG. — PICTURESQUE AND BEAUTIFUL NOTWITHSTANDING ITS ARCHITECTURE. — NATURE BEAUTIFUL EVEN NEAR THE POLE. — ANTIPATHY BETWEEN THE TEUTONIC AND RUSSIAN RACES. — ITS EFFECTS IN POLAND. — RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THE RUSSIANS AND SPANIARDS. — HEAT OF THE SUMMER. — FUEL IN PETERSBURG. — ADDRESS OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE. — THE DESIGNS OF PROVIDENCE. — FUTURE SCARCITY OF FUEL IN RUSSIA. — WANT OF INVENTIVE MECHANICAL GENIUS AMONG THE PEOPLE. — THE ROMANS OF THE NORTH. — RELATION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THEIR GOVERNMENTS. — THE PLASTERERS. — UGLINESS AND DIRTINESS OF THE WOMEN OF THE LOWER CLASSES. — THEIR DISPROPORTION IN POINT OF NUMBER, AND ITS RESULT. — ASIATIC MANNERS. — RUSSIAN POLITENESS.

THE population of Petersburg amounts to four hundred and fifty thousand souls, besides the garrison. So say patriotic Russians; but those who are well informed, and who consequently pass here for evil-disposed persons, assure me that it does not reach to four hundred thousand, in which number the garrison is included. Small houses of wood occupy the quarters beyond those immense spaces, called squares, that form the centre of the city.

The Russians, descended from a junction of various warlike and wandering tribes, have not yet quite forgotten the life of the bivouac. Petersburg is the head-quarters of an army, and not the capital of a nation. However magnificent this military city may be, it appears bare and naked in the eyes of one from the West of Europe.

"The distances are the curse of Russia," said the emperor; and it is a remark the justice of which may be verified even in the streets of Petersburg. Thus, it is not for the sake of display that people's carriages are drawn by four horses: here every visit is an excursion. The Russian horses, though full of mettle and sinew, have not so much bone as ours: the badness of the pavement soon tires them; two horses could not easily draw for any considerable time an ordinary carriage in the streets of Petersburg. To drive four is therefore an object of the first necessity to those who wish to live in the fashionable world. Among the Russians, however, all have not the right to attach four horses to their carriage. This permission is only accorded to persons of a certain rank.

After leaving the centre of the city the stranger loses himself in vaguely-defined lines of road, bordered by barracks which seem as though destined for the temporary accommodation of labourers employed in some great work; they are the magazines of forage, clothes, and of other supplies for the military. The grass grows in these *soi-disant* and always deserted streets.

So many peristyles have been added to houses, so many porticoes adorn the barracks that here re-

present palaces, so great a passion for borrowed decorations has presided over the construction of this temporary capital, that I count fewer men than columns in the squares of Petersburg, always silent and melancholy, by reason of their size alone, and their unchangeable règularity. The line and rulé figure well the manner in which absolute sovereigns view things, and straight angles may be said to be the blocks over which despotic architecture stumbles. Living architecture, if the expression may be permitted, will not rise at command. It springs, so to speak, from itself, and is an involuntary creation of the genius and wants of a people. To make a great nation is infallibly to create an architecture. I should not be astonished if some one succeeded in proving that there are as many original styles of architecture as mother tongues. The mania for rules of symmetry is not, however, peculiar to the Russians: with us, it is a legacy of the Empire. Had it not been for this bad taste of the Parisian architects, we should, long since, have been presented with some sensible plan for ornamenting and finishing our monstrous Place du Carrousel, but the necessity for parallels stops every thing.

When architects of genius successively contributed their efforts to making the square of the Grand Duke at Florence one of the most beautiful objects in the world, they were not tyrannised over by a passion for straight lines and arbitrary proportions: they conceived the idea of the beautiful in all its liberty, without reference to mathematical diagrams. It has been a want of the instinctive perceptions of art, and the free creations of fancy working upon popular

data, which has caused a mathematical eye to preside over the creation of Petersburg. One can never for a moment forget, in surveying this abode of monuments without genius, that it is a city built by a man, and not by a people. The conceptions appear limited, though their dimensions are enormous.

The principal street in Petersburg is the Perspective Newski, one of the three lines which meet at the palace of the Admiralty. These three lines divide into five regular parts the southern side of the city, which, like Versailles, takes the form of a fan. It is more modern than the port, built near to the islands by Peter the Great.

The Perspective Newski deserves to be described in detail. It is a beautiful street, a league in length, and as broad as our Boulevards. In several places trees have been planted, as unfortunate in their position as those of Paris. It serves as a promenade and rendezvous for all the idlers of the city. Of these, however, there are but few, for here people seldom move for the sake of moving; each step that is taken has an object independent of pleasure. To carry an order—to pay their court—to obey their master, whoever he may be—such are the influences which put in motion the greater part of the population of Petersburg and of the empire.

Large uneven flint-stones form the execrable pavement of this boulevard called the Perspective: but here, as in some other principal streets, there are deeply imbedded in the midst of the stones, blocks of fir-wood in the shape of cubes, and sometimes of octagons, over which the carriages glide swiftly. Each of these pavements consists of two lines, two or three

feet broad, and separated by a stripe of the ordinary flint pavement on which the shaft horse runs. Two of these roads, that is to say, four lines of wood, run the length of the Perspective Newski, one on the left, the other on the right of the street, without touching the houses, from which they are separated by raised flags for the foot passengers. This beautiful and vast perspective extends—gradually becoming less populous, less beautiful, and more melancholy—to the undetermined limits of the habitable city, in other words, to the confines of the Asiatic barbarism by which Petersburg is always besieged; for the desert may be found at the extremity of its most superb streets.

A little below the bridge of Aniskoff is the street named Jelognaia, which leads to a desert called the square of Alexander. I doubt whether the Emperor Nicholas has ever seen this street. The superb city created by Peter the Great, and beautified by Catherine II., and other sovereigns, is lost at last in an unsightly mass of stalls and workshops, confused heaps of edifices without name, large squares without design, and in which the natural slovenliness and the inborn filthiness of the people of the land, have for one hundred years permitted every species of dirt and rubbish to accumulate. Such filth, heaped up year after year in the Russian cities, serves as a protestation against the pretension of the German princes, who flatter themselves that they have thoroughly polished the Slavonian nations. The primitive character of these people, however disguised it may have been by the yoke imposed upon it, at least shows itself in some of the corners of the cities; and if they

have cities it is not because they wanted them, but because their military masters compel them to emulate the West of Europe. These unfortunate animals, placed in the cage of European civilisation, are victims of the mania, or rather of the ambition of the Czars, conquerors of the future world, and who well know that before subjugating us, they must imitate us.

Nothing, I am told, can give any idea of the state of the Petersburg streets during the melting of the snow. Within the fortnight which follows the breaking up of the ice on the Neva, all the bridges are carried away, and the communications between different quarters of the city are, during several days, interrupted, and often entirely broken off. The streets then become the beds of furious torrents: few political crises could cause so much damage as this annual revolt of nature against an incomplete and impracticable civilisation. Since the thaw at Petersburg has been described to me I complain no longer of the pavements, detestable though they be; for I remember they have to be renewed every year.

After mid-day, the Perspective Newski, the grand square of the palace, the quays and the bridges are enlivened by a considerable number of carriages of various kinds and curious forms: this rather relieves the habitual dulness of the most monotonous capital in Europe. The interior of the houses is equally gloomy, for notwithstanding the magnificence of certain apartments destined to receive company, and furnished in the English style, there may be seen in the back ground various signs of a want of cleanliness and order which at once reminds the observer of Asia.

The articles of furniture least used in a Russian house are beds. The women servants sleep in recesses similar to those in the old fashioned porters' lodges in France; whilst the men roll themselves up on the stairs, in the vestibule, and even, it is said, in the saloons upon the cushions, which they place on the floor for the night.

This morning I paid a visit to Prince ——. He is a great nobleman, but decayed in estate, infirm and dropsical. He suffers so greatly that he cannot get up, and yet he has no bed on which to lie,—I mean to say, nothing which would be called a bed in lands where civilisation is of older date. He lives in the house of his sister, who is absent. Alone in this naked palace, he passes the night on a wooden board covered with a carpet and some pillows. In all the Russian houses that I have entered, I have observed that the screen is as necessary to the bed of the Slavonians as musk is to their persons:—intense dirtiness does not always exclude external elegance. Sometimes however they have a bed for show, an object of luxury, which is maintained through respect for European fashions, but of which no use is ever made. The residences of several Russians of taste are distinguished by a peculiar ornament—a little artificial garden in the corner of the drawing-room. Three long stands of flowers are ranged round a window so as to form a little verdant saloon or kind of chiosc, which reminds one of those in gardens. The stands are surmounted by an ornamented balustrade, which rises to about the height of a man, and is overgrown with ivy or other climbing plants that twist around the trellis work, and produce

a cool agreeable effect in the midst of a vast apartment blazing with gilt work, and crowded with furniture. In this little verdant boudoir are placed a table and a few chairs: the lady of the house is generally seated there, and there is room for two or three others, for whom it forms a retreat, which, if not very secret, is secluded enough to please the imagination.

The effect of this household thicket is not more pleasing than the idea is sensible in a land where secrecy should preside over all private conversation. The usage is, I believe, imported from Asia.

I should not be surprised to see the artificial gardens of the Russian saloons introduced some day into the houses of Paris. They would not disfigure the abode of the most fashionable female politician in France. I should rejoice to see the innovation, were it only to cope with the Anglo-manes who have inflicted an injury on good taste and the real genius of the French, which I shall never pardon. The Slavonians, when they are handsome, are lightly and elegantly formed, though their appearance still conveys the idea of strength. Their eyes are all oval in shape, and have the deceitful, furtive glance of the Asiatics. Whether dark or blue, they are invariably clear and lively, constantly in motion, and when they laugh their expression is very graceful.

This people, grave by necessity rather than by nature, scarcely dare to laugh except with their eyes; but, words being thus repressed, these eyes, animated by silence, supply the place of eloquence, so strongly is passion depicted in their expression. That expression is almost always intelligent, and sometimes gentle,

though more often anxious even to a degree of wildness that conveys the idea of some animal of the deer kind caught in the toils.

The Slavonians, born to guide a chariot, show good blood, like the horses which they drive. Their strange appearance and the activity of their steeds render it amusing to traverse the streets of Petersburg. Thanks to its inhabitants, and, in despite of its architects, this city resembles no other in Europe.

The Russian coachmen sit upright on their seats; they always drive at great speed, but with safety. The precision and quickness of their eye is admirable. Whether with two or four horses, they have always two reins to each horse, which they hold with the arms much extended. No impediment stops them in their course; men and horses, both half wild, scour the city at full speed: but nature has rendered them quick and adroit, consequently, notwithstanding the reckless daring of these coachmen, accidents are of rare occurrence in the streets of Petersburg. They have often no whip, or when they have one, it is so short that they can make no use of it. Neither do they have recourse to the voice: the reins and the bit are their only instruments. One may traverse Petersburg for hours without hearing a single shout. If the pedestrians do not get out of the way sufficiently quickly, the falleiter, or postillion, utters a little yelp, like the sharp cry of a marmot roused in his nest, on hearing which every one gives way, and the carriage rushes past without having once slackened its speed.

The carriages are in general void of all taste, badly furnished, and badly kept. If brought from England they do not long resist the wear and tear of the

pavement of Petersburg. The harness is strong, and at the same time light and elegant: it is made of excellent leather; in short, notwithstanding the want of taste, and the negligence of the servants, the *tout ensemble* of these equipages is original, and, to a certain degree, picturesque.

They only harness four horses abreast for long journeys. In Petersburg they are placed two and two; the traces by which they are attached are long beyond all proportion. The child who guides them is, like the coachman, dressed in the Persian robe called the *armiac*. However well it may suit the man who is seated, it is not convenient on horseback; notwithstanding which the Russian postillion is bold and dextrous.

I do not know how to describe the gravity, the haughty silence, the address, and the imperturbable temerity of these little Slavonian monkeys. Their pertness and dexterity are my delight every time that I go in the city, and they have, which is less often seen here than elsewhere, the appearance of being happy. It is the nature of man to experience satisfaction when what he does is done well. The Russian coachmen and postillions being the most skilful in the world, are perhaps content with their lot, however hard it may be in some respects.

It must also be observed that those in the service of the nobles pique themselves on their personal appearance, and take pains with it; but those who ply on hire, excite, as do also their unfortunate horses, my sincere pity. They remain in the street from morning till evening, at the door of the person who lets them out, or on the stands assigned by the police.

The horses eat always in harness, and the men always on their seat. I pity the former more than the latter; for the Russians have a taste for servitude.

The coachmen live, however, in this manner only during the summer. In the winter, sheds are built in the midst of the most frequented squares, and near the theatres, and the palaces where fêtes are most frequently given. Around this shelter, large fires are lighted, where the servants warm themselves; nevertheless, in the month of January, scarcely a night passes on which there is a ball, without a man or two dying of cold in the streets.

A lady, more sincere than others to whom I addressed questions on this subject, replied, "It is possible, but I have never heard it talked about." A denial which involved a strange avowal. It is necessary to visit this city in order to learn the extent to which the rich man will carry his contempt for the life of the poor, and the slight value which life in general has in the eyes of men condemned to live under absolutism.

In Russia existence is painful to every body. The Emperor is scarcely less inured to fatigue than the lowest of his serfs. I have been shown his bed, the hardness of which would astonish our common labourers. Here every one is obliged to repeat to himself the stern truth, that the object of life is not to be found on earth, and that the means of attaining it is not pleasure. The inexorable image of duty and of submission appears at each instant, and makes it impossible to forget the hard condition of human existence — labour and sorrow!

If for a moment, in the midst of a public prome-

nade, the appearance of a few idlers should inspire the illusive idea that there may be in Russia, as elsewhere, men who amuse themselves for the sake of amusement, men who make pleasure a business, I am soon undeceived by the sight of some feldjäger, passing rapidly in his telega. The feldjäger is the representative of power — he is the word of the sovereign: a living telegraph, he proceeds to bear an order to another similar automaton, who awaits him, perhaps, a thousand leagues off, and who is as ignorant as himself of the thoughts that put them both in motion. The telega, in which the man of iron travels, is of all travelling vehicles the most uncomfortable. It consists of a little cart with two leather seats, without springs or back. No other kind of carriage could stand the roads of this savage empire. The first seat is that of the coachman, who is changed at each stage; the second is reserved for the courier, who travels till he dies; and among men devoted to such a life this happens early.

Those whom I see rapidly traversing in every direction the fine streets of this city, seem to represent the solitudes in which they are about to plunge. I follow them in imagination, and at the end of their course appears to me Siberia, Kamtschatka, the Salt Desert, the Wall of China, Lapland, the Frozen Ocean, Nova Zembla, Persia, or the Caucasus. These historical or, almost, fabulous names, produce on my imagination the effect of a dim and vapoury distance in a vast landscape, and engender a species of reverie which oppresses my spirits. Nevertheless, the apparition of such blind, deaf, and dumb couriers is a poetical aliment, constantly presented to the mind

of the stranger. This man, born to live and die in his telega, imparts of himself a melancholy interest to the humblest scene of life. Nothing prosaic can subsist in the mind when in the presence of so much suffering and so much grandeur. It must be owned that if despotism renders unhappy the people that it oppresses, it is conducive to the amusement of travellers, whom it fills with an astonishment ever new. Where there is liberty, every thing is published and speedily forgotten, for every thing is seen at a glance; but, under an absolute government, every thing is concealed, and therefore every thing is conjectured: the greater the mystery, the greater the curiosity, which is enhanced even by the necessary absence of apparent interest.

Russia has no past history, say the lovers of antiquity. True, but the immense field she occupies, and the prospect of the future, might serve as a pasture for the most ardent imaginations. The philosopher in Russia is to be pitied, the poet there may and ought to be gratified.

The only poets really unhappy, are those condemned to languish under a system of publicity. When all the world may say what they please, the poet must hold his peace. Poetry is a mystery which serves to express more than words; it cannot subsist among a people who have lost the modesty of thought. Vision, allegory, apologue, are the truth of poetry; and in a country where publicity pervades every thing this truth is destroyed by reality, which is always coarse and repulsive to the eye of fancy.

Nature must have implanted a sentiment profoundly poetical in the souls of this satirical and me-

lancholy people, or they could never have found the means of giving an original and picturesque aspect to cities built by men entirely destitute of imagination; and this in the most flat, dull, naked and monotonous region in the earth. Nevertheless, if I could describe Petersburg as I see it, I should draw a picture in every line; so strikingly has the genius of the Slavonian race reacted against the sterile mania of its government. This anti-national government advances only by military evolutions: it reminds one of Prussia under its first king.

I have been describing a city without character, rather pompous than imposing, more vast than beautiful, and full of edifices without style, taste, or historic interest. But to make the picture complete, that is, faithful, I should have inserted the figures of men naturally graceful, and who, with their oriental genius, have adapted themselves to a city built by a people which exist no where, for Petersburg has been constructed by wealthy men, whose minds were formed by comparing, without deep study, the different countries of Europe. This legion of travellers, more or less refined, and rather skilful than learned, formed an artificial nation, a community of intelligent and clever characters, recruited from among all the nations of the world. They did not constitute the Russian people. These are roguish as the slave, who consoles himself by privately ridiculing his master; superstitious, boastful, brave and idle as the soldier; poetical, musical, and contemplative as the shepherd; for the habits of a nomade people for a long time prevailed among the Slavonians. All this is in keeping neither with the style of the architecture nor

with the plan of the streets in Petersburg: there has been evidently no connection between the architect and the inhabitant. Peter the Great built the city against the Swedes rather than for the Russians; but the natural character of its population betrays itself, notwithstanding their respect for the caprices of their master; and it is to this involuntary disobedience that Russia owes its stamp of originality. Nothing can efface the primitive character of its people; and this triumph of innate faculties over an ill-directed education is an interesting spectacle to every traveller capable of appreciating it.

Happily for the painter and the poet, the Russians possess an essentially religious sentiment. Their churches, at least, are their own. The unchangeable form of these pious edifices is a part of their religion, and superstition defends her sacred fortresses against the mania for mathematical figures in freestone, oblongs, planes and straight lines; in short, against the military, rather than classic architecture, which imparts to each of the cities of this land the air of a camp destined to remain for a few weeks during the performance of some grand manœuvres.

The genius of a nomade race is equally recognised in the various vehicles and harness, the carriages and the drowska already described. The latter is so small as quite to disappear under those who occupy it. Its singular appearance, as it passes rapidly between long straight lines of very low houses, over which are seen the steeples of a multitude of churches and other buildings, may be easily imagined.

These gilded or painted spires break the monotonous line of roofs, and rise in the air with shafts so tapered,

that the eye can scarcely distinguish the point where their gilding is lost in the mists of a polar sky. They are of Asiatic origin, and appear to be of a height which, for their diameter, is truly extraordinary. It is impossible to conceive how they maintain themselves in air.

Let the reader picture to himself an assemblage of domes, to which are attached the four belfries necessary to constitute a church among the modern Greeks; a multitude of cupolas covered with gold, silver, or azure; palace roofs of emerald green, or ultra-marine; squares ornamented with bronze statues; an immense river bordering and serving as a mirror to the picture — let him add to it the bridge of boats thrown across the river's broadest part — the citadel, where sleep in their unornamented tombs Peter the Great and his family*, and an island covered with edifices built after the model of Grecian temples — let him embrace in one view the whole of these varied parts, and he will understand how Petersburg may be infinitely picturesque, notwithstanding the bad taste of its borrowed architecture, the marshes which surround it, the unbroken flatness of its site, and the pale dimness of its finest summer days.

Let me not be reproached for my contradictions; I have myself perceived them without wishing to avoid them, for they lie in the things which I contemplate. I could not give a true idea of objects that I describe, if I did not often seem to contradict myself. If I were less sincere, I should appear more consistent; but in physical as in moral order, truth

* The Greek rite forbids sculpture in churches.

is only an assemblage of contrasts — contrasts so glaring, that it might be said nature and society have been created only in order to hold together elements which would otherwise oppose and repel each other.

Nothing can be more dull than the sky of Petersburg at midday; but the evenings and mornings, whose twilight occupies three quarters of the whole period of life, are admirable. The summer sun, which is submerged for a moment about midnight, continues for a long time to float along the horizon on a level with the Neva and the lowlands through which it flows. It sheds over the waste, streams of light brilliant enough to beautify nature in her most cheerless aspect. But it is not the enthusiasm produced by the deep colouring of tropic landscapes which this beauty inspires, it is the attraction of a dream, the irresistible influence of a sleep full of memories and of hopes. The promenade of the islands at this hour is the image of a real idyll. No doubt there are many things wanting in these scenes to constitute pictures good as compositions, but nature has more power than art on the imagination of man; her simple aspect suffices under every zone to supply that necessity for admiring which exists in the soul. God has reduced the earth in the vicinity of the pole to the extreme of flatness and nudity; but notwithstanding this poverty, the spectacle of creation will always, in the eye of man, be the most eloquent interpreter of the designs of the Creator. May there not be beauty in the bald head? For my part, I find the environs of Petersburg more than beautiful: they have a sad and sombre dulness about them which is sublime, and which, in the depth of its

impression, rivals the richness and variety of the most celebrated landscapes of the earth. They present no pompous, artificial work, nor agreeable invention, but a profound solitude, a solitude terrible and beautiful as death. From one end of her plains, from one shore of her seas to the other, Russia hears that voice of God which nothing can silence, and which says to man, puffed up with the contemptible magnificence of his miserable cities, "Your labour is vain, I am still the greatest!" Often a countenance devoid of beauty has more expression, and engraves itself on our memory in a manner more ineffaceable than those regular traits which display neither passion nor sentiment. Such is the effect of our instinct of immortality, that the things which most highly interest an inhabitant of earth are those which speak to him of something unearthly.

How admirable is the power of the primitive endowment of nations! For more than a hundred years the higher classes of Russians, the nobles, the learned, and the powerful of the land, have been begging ideas and copying models from all the communities of Europe; and yet this absurd phantasy of princes and courtiers has not prevented the people from remaining original.*

The finely endowed Slavonic race has too delicate a touch to mingle indiscriminately with the Teutonic people. The German character has even at this day a less affinity with the Russian than has the Spanish, with its cross of Arab blood. Slowness, heaviness,

* This reproach, which applies to Peter I. and his immediate successors, completes the eulogy of the Emperor Nicholas, who has begun to stem the torrent of the mania.

coarseness, timidity and awkwardness have nothing in common with the genius of the Slavonians. They would rather endure vengeance and tyranny. Even the German virtues are odious to the Russians; thus, in a few years the latter, notwithstanding their religious and political atrocities, have made greater progress in public opinion at Warsaw* than the Prussians, notwithstanding the rare and solid qualities which distinguish the German people. I do not speak of this as desirable, I only note it as an existing fact: it is not all brothers who love, but all understand each other.

As to the analogy which I imagine I can in certain points discover between the Russians and the Spaniards, it is accounted for by the relations which may have originally existed between some of the Arab tribes and some of the hordes which passed from Asia into Muscovy. The Moresque architecture bears an affinity to the Byzantine, which is the model of the real Muscovite. The genius of the Asiatic wanderers in Africa could not be contrary to that of other eastern nations but recently established in Europe. History is explained by the progressive influence of races.

But for the difference in religion and the variety of manners among the people, I could fancy myself here on one of the most elevated and barren plains of Castile. In fact we are enduring at present the heat of Africa; for twenty years Petersburg has not known so burning a summer.

Notwithstanding the tropical heats, I see the Rus-

*The Poles are of Slavonic race. — *Trans.*

sians already preparing their provision of winter fuel. Boats loaded with billets of birch wood, the only fuel used here (for the oak is a tree of luxury), obstruct the large and numerous canals which intersect the city in every direction. It is built on the model of Amsterdam: an arm of the Neva flows through the principal streets, which in winter is filled up by the ice and snow, and in summer by the innumerable boats. The wood is conveyed from the boats in narrow carts of a primitive simplicity of construction, on which it is piled to a height which makes it resemble a moving wall. I have never once seen any of these tottering edifices fall.

The Russian people are singularly adroit: it is against the will of nature that this race of men has been driven by human revolutions towards the pole, and that it is kept there by political circumstances. He who would penetrate further into the designs of Providence, might perhaps recognise a war with the elements as the rough trial to which God has subjected a nation, destined by Him some day to rule over others. A situation demanding a severe struggle is the school of Providence.

Fuel is becoming scarce in Russia. Wood is as dear in Petersburg as in Paris. There are houses here which consume the value of nine or ten thousand francs per winter. In beholding the inroads made upon the forests we may ask, with inquietude, how will the next generation warm themselves.

If the jest be pardonable, I would advise as a measure of prudence on the part of the people who enjoy a genial climate, that they should furnish the

Russians wherewith to keep good fires. They might then less covet the southern sun.

The carts used for removing the filth and refuse of the city are small and inconvenient. With such machines a man and horse can do but little work in a day. Generally speaking, the Russians show their skill rather in their manner of using inferior implements than by the pains they take to perfect those which they have. Endowed with little power of invention, they most frequently lack the mechanical appliances suitable to the end they would attain. This people, who possess so much grace and so much facility of character, have no creative genius. Once for all, the Russians are the Romans of the north. Both people have drawn their arts and sciences from strangers. The former have intelligence, but it is an imitative and therefore ironical intelligence; it counterfeits every thing, and imagines nothing. Ridicule is a prevailing trait in the character of tyrants and slaves. All oppressed people are given to slander, satire, and caricature; they revenge themselves for their inaction and degradation by sarcasm. The nature of the relation which exists between nations and their governments has yet to be elucidated. In my opinion, each nation has for a government the only one which it could have. I do not however pretend either to impose or expound this system. It is a labour which I leave to those who are worthier and wiser than I: my present object is the less ambitious one of describing that which has most struck me in the streets and on the quays of Petersburg.

Several parts of the Neva are entirely covered with boats of hay. These rural objects are larger

than many houses; they are hung with straw mattings, which give them the picturesque appearance of oriental tents or Chinese junks.

The trade of plasterer is important in a city the interior of whose houses is a prey to swarms of vermin, and the exterior spoilt in appearance every winter. The manner in which the Russian plasterers perform their work is curious. There are only three months in the year during which they can work outside the houses; the number of artificers is therefore considerable, and they are found at the corner of every street. These men, suspended at the peril of their life on little planks attached to a long hanging cord, seem to support themselves like insects against the edifices which they rewhiten.

In the provinces they whitewash the towns through which the emperor may have to pass: is this an honour rendered to the sovereign, or do they seek to deceive him as regards the wretchedness of the land? In general the Russians carry about their persons a disagreeable odour, which is perceptible at a considerable distance. The higher classes smell of musk, the common people of cabbage, mixed with exhalations of onions and old greasy perfumed leather. These scents never vary.

It may be supposed from this, that the thirty thousand subjects of the emperor who enter his palace on the 1st of January, to offer him their felicitations, and the six or seven thousand that we shall see to-morrow pressing into the interior of the palace of Peterhoff, in honour of their empress, must leave on their passage a formidable perfume.

Among all the women of the lower orders whom I

have hitherto met in the streets, not a single one has appeared to me to possess beauty, and the greater number among them are ugly and dirty to a degree that is repulsive. Astonishment is excited by the recollection that they are the wives and mothers of men with features so fine and regular, profiles so perfectly Grecian, and forms so elegant and supple as those seen among even the lowest classes of the nation. There are no where old men so handsome, nor old women so hideous, as in Russia. I have seen few of the citizens' wives. One of the singularities of Petersburg is, that the number of women in proportion to that of the men is less than in other capitals. I am assured that the former do not at the utmost form more than a third of the total population of the city. Their scarcity causes them to be only too highly prized. They attract so eager an attention that there are few who risk themselves alone after a certain hour in the streets of the less populous quarters. In the capital of a country altogether military, and among a people addicted to drunkenness, this discreetness appears to me sufficiently well founded. At all times the Russian women show themselves less in public than the French: it is not necessary to go far back to find the time when they passed their lives shut up like the women of Asia. This reserve, the remembrance of which still lingers, recalls, like so many other Russian customs, the origin of the people. It contributes to the dulness of the streets and the fêtes of Petersburg. The finest sights in this city are the parades, which strengthens my former observation, that the Russian capital is a camp, somewhat more stable and pacific than a mere bivouac.

There are few *cafés* in Petersburg, and no authorised public balls in the interior of the city. The promenades are little frequented, and those who are met there exhibit a gravity that conveys but little idea of enjoyment.

But if fear renders the men serious, it also renders them extremely polite. I have never elsewhere seen so many men of all classes treating each other with respect. The driver of the drowska formally salutes his comrade, who never passes him without rendering reverence for reverence; the porters salute the plasterers, and so with all the others. This urbanity is, perhaps, affected; at least, I believe it overstrained: nevertheless, the mere appearance of amenity contributes to the pleasure of life. If a pretended politeness has so much about it that is valuable, what a charm must real politeness possess, the politeness, that is to say, of the heart!

A stay in Petersburg would be agreeable to any traveller who possessed character, and who could believe all that he heard. The greatest difficulty would be the escaping of dinners and soirées, those real plagues of Russia, and it may be added of all societies where strangers are admitted, and consequently where intimacy is excluded.

I have accepted here but few private invitations. I was chiefly curious to view the solemnities of the court, but I have seen enough; one soon wearies of wonders in the contemplation of which the heart has no share.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON:
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.

00085067

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 20 February, 2016